

Virtue and Addiction

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Introduction

ETHICAL REFLECTION may be compared to grammar. Knowledge of grammatical rules is not absolutely necessary. Most ancient Romans did not study Latin grammar, and yet they spoke the language that they picked up from their parents. But those who did study grammar found it is useful, and not only as a tool in the teaching of Latin to barbarians. This was because grammar explains the internal rules of a language, and so it expands the possibilities of expression, ensuring precision in articulation. In deciphering the structures of the language, it influences thinking, the articulation of thought, thereby correcting unjustified simplifications and logical errors. Something similar may be said about ethical reflection. Moral life differs from a speculative discourse about ethics and moral theology. When an individual is raised in an honest family and a cultural setting that coherently affirm basic moral values, upright living becomes almost automatic. The perception of fundamental moral truths may then be intuitive and adherence to them simple. But a rational, speculative study of the principles of ethics is still worthy of the effort because it contributes to inner moral coherence. In the face of contrary winds, coming from internal temptations or from adverse surroundings, the clear knowledge of moral principles assists in the correction of behavior and in the development of psychic mechanisms of moral action. Philosophical ethical reflection furnishes the grammar of upright living. Moral theology furnishes the grammar of the fecundity of grace within the life of the Christian.

Those who have succumbed to grave moral disorder and have become addicted to some ruining enslaving idol will not be cured uniquely by

theoretical knowledge. More than the grammar of up-right living is needed, but clarity of reflection may assist in the sorting out of intuitive perceptions and instinctive reactions that, being imprecise or even contrary to reality, lock the individual in a track that is not leading to liberty.

Ethical reflection may center on acts, on norms and on virtues. The casuist approach focuses almost uniquely upon acts, assessing their moral qualification. Norm ethics tries to understand the principles that govern individual acts. When ethical reflection limits itself to the imposition of rules and procedures that are derived from sacred texts or from some decisions of higher bodies, the conscience is reduced to the level of a subjective, basically insignificant intuition or feeling. Virtue ethics, as it is developed in the great Catholic tradition, looks into the psychic mechanisms of good living. Not only concern about the avoidance of accidents and the study of obligatory traffic regulations are necessary, but also the ensuring that the internal driving mechanism is adroit and that the finality of the journey is clear. And, when it turns out that the internal mechanism is faulty, ways of repairing it have to be found and explained.

In the study of morality, a basic principle of methodology has to be followed. The method of cognition is conditioned by the object that is studied. Moral action involves the spiritual faculties of the reason and the will as they face the *verum bonum*. Furthermore, these faculties may be under the influence of divine grace. Since human nature encompasses a spiritual and a bodily component, moral action, both good and deformed, may be studied by theology, by philosophy, and by the experimental sciences. Neurobiological sciences offer their input in the study of the addicted person, but they have no right to make the erroneous metaphysical assertion that only physical and biological reality exists, meaning that only their discoveries merit attention.¹ The human brain is a condition for fully human action, and so its functioning and failures need to be studied, but empirical sciences cannot question or deny the validity of philosophical and theological enquiry. The conclusions of theology, philosophy, and empirical science about the human person, virtuous action, and addictive deformations of the ethos need to be put together in a coherent whole.

¹ Martin Rhonheimer, "Ragione morale, persona e virtù: la prospettiva aristotelico-tomista di fronte alle sfide attuali," in *Persona e natura nell'agire morale: Memoriale di Cracovia. Studi. Contributi*, ed. Juan José Pérez-Soba, Paweł Gałuszka, (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2013), 185–201.

The Moral Virtues

The term “virtue” describes primarily a psychic capacity for good action. It is not a description of the moral value in itself, but of the formed conditioning of the upright person, who has the capacity of adhering creatively to the moral value. Virtues cannot be appropriately understood within a frame of mind centered uniquely upon moral obligations. The catalogue of virtues worked out by traditional ethics is not a list of moral precepts and duties that appear within various sectors of the human psyche and life. It is a description of permanent conditionings of the human faculties as they are habituated to adhere to the true good. In the adherence to the good, the faculties need to take into account the inherent essences and finalities of reality, and it is that reality that attributes value to the faculties as they aim for it. Thus, it is possible to distinguish between virtues and vices as between those internal conditionings of the psyche that focus on the true good and those that deny it. The faculties, however, are geared towards the good in its generality, and so, when they are grasped by virtue, personal and cultural conditionings color that grasping. It is not, therefore, surprising that a historian may note across the ages differing practical perceptions of what is deemed to be virtuous activity.² This is not necessarily a sign of historical moral relativism, but rather a pointer to the fact that, within the virtuous grasping of the true good, there is room for a creativity that is lived out from within a given social and cultural context.

The Augustinian definition of virtue as *ordo amoris* allows for a dual interpretation. It may mean that virtue orders loving, purifying it from untrue and only apparent loves. And it may also mean that virtue brings the order contributed by true loving into the entire ethos. The moral order generated by virtue signifies the stringing together of the dynamism of the body and spirit into an internal pattern that is purposeful and harmonious. The virtuous person enjoys the peace that comes from having one’s interiority well organized for clearly defined and good aims and experiences internal joy that springs from creative action. When the moral order is formulated externally through the moral law, this is a verbal articulation of that order that persists within the virtuous individ-

² Alasdair MacIntyre (*After Virtue. A Study of Moral Theory* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984]) seems to be perplexed by this. When the understanding of virtue is purified from an excessive obligatory trait and from an Enlightenment dry facticity, and instead, it centers on the psychological quality of the virtue, the cultural rooting of practical adherences to the true good ceases to be perplexing.

ual and has a primacy over law.³ Moral law is pedagogical. It serves in the focusing of the reason towards the objective common good, which has an attractiveness of its own.⁴ Thus it serves interior liberty.⁵

Moral virtues that are grouped around the cardinal virtues of fortitude and temperance are located within the affective movement of the emotions. Virtue allows for the integration of the passions, which are bodily, within the focus supplied by the spiritual faculties of the reason and the will. The integration and mutual cooperation of the bodily and the spiritual spheres is not only necessary, but also possible, even though the dominion of the spiritual faculties over the bodily is political and not despotic,⁶ meaning that the individual does sometimes have to play with himself so as to grow in the virtuous disposition, without ever excluding the dynamism of the passions. Virtue does not deny feelings, which are natural and therefore good. Their strength depends upon the temperament and bodily disposition of the individual. Virtue brings a rational mean into the attachment to an object, but not into the emotional experience itself that is generated by the object. That experience may be infinite and has to remain so. Sobriety allows for restraint in the drinking of wine in view of a given situation and its responsibilities. It does not, however, question the enjoyment of good wine. The virtuous person may acquire an exquisite competence in assessing the qualities of good wine, and this competence and passion for good wine

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter, *ST*), IIa-IIae, q. 57, a. 1 ad 2: “[A]n idea in the mind, a rule or pattern for prudence or practical wisdom, prescribes what is a just deed according to reason. If this be set down in writing, it is called a law” (trans. T. Gilby, vol. 37, [London: Blackfriars, 1975]). All further quotations from and citations of *ST* will be from this edition series, given with translator’s name, vol. number, and year, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ This is the sense of the opening phrase within Aquinas’s definition of law: “[O]rdinance of reason for the common good” (*ST* Ia-IIae, q. 90 a. 4, [Gilby, vol. 28, 1966]), which is not to be interpreted as the command of the legislator. Cf. Wojciech Giertych, “The Definition of Moral Law,” *Angelicum* 85 (2008): 627–648, and Giuseppe Abbà, *Lex et virtus. Studi sull’evoluzione della dottrina morale di san Tommaso d’Aquino* (Rome: LAS, 1983).

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, 2 Cor, ch. 3, l. 3, 112: “Therefore, one who avoids evils, not because they are evil, but because of God’s commandment, is not free. But one who avoids evils, because they are evils is free. But this is done by the Holy Spirit . . .” (trans. F.R. Larcher, B. Mortensen, and D. Keating [Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012]).

⁶ *ST* Ia, q. 81, a. 3 ad 2: “But understanding and reason are said to rule aggressiveness and desirousness in a politic manner . . .” (T. Suttor, vol. 11, 1970).

is brought into play in creative virtuous living. In fact, virtues need the passions that supply the bodily stuff of the virtues, for it is the passions that invite a creative generosity within virtuous action.⁷ Servais Pinckaers, in his last book,⁸ improved upon his earlier study of the virtues⁹ by considering them in the light of the passions. Instead of beginning his reflection with an explanation of how the virtues handle the emotions, Pinckaers focused first of all upon the emotions themselves, presenting them as necessary and normal human reactions. Love, desire, sadness, disgust, pity, fear, and anger are needed in truly human living. In his presentation, he included also such passions that had not been dealt with in traditional presentations: the sense of humor, the appreciation of silence, religious feelings, fascination for work, and the need for leisure. This reversal of approach aimed at eliciting the colorfulness of necessary human feelings that are brought wisely to the fore in virtuous living. Virtue entails a rich, passionate, cultured, and creative reaction to human challenges. In mature human life, the passions are the friends of virtue. They generate the perception of challenges and provoke a response. Those whose passions are undeveloped and who are not virtuous fail to perceive the challenges, and their life is then superficial and boring.

The integration of the emotions by virtues influences the entire person. If there is disorder within the passions, the intellect itself will find it difficult to ensure an appropriate direction. The feelings have to be right.¹⁰ When they conform to reason, they also render the reason more apt to direct action in accord with justified motives. The true good is then perceived with greater facility as a good. Natural bodily dispositions and formed habits have an impact on perceptions and reactions, but they are not beyond rational judgment and direction, on the condition, of course, that the bodily input is basically healthy. Well domesticated and integrated passions contribute to internal peace.

The psychic mechanism of virtue is explained through the term *habitus*, which means something more than a mere habit. The *habitus* is an expression of the free choice, the *liberum arbitrium*, in which the reason and the will combine in the rational choice of a good. The *habi-*

⁷ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 59, a. 5 ad 3: “Man’s good activity, however, is in conjunction with passion, even as it is produced with the help of the body” (W. D. Hughes, vol. 23, 1969).

⁸ *Passions et vertu*, (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2009). This book was published after Pinckaers’s death.

⁹ *Plaidoyer pour la vertu*, (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2009).

¹⁰ Cf. Vincent Twomey, *Moral Theology after Humanae Vitae: Fundamental Issues in Moral Theology and Sexual Ethics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 89.

tus, and therefore the virtue, assures permanence, facility, pleasure, and creativeness in choosing the good. Since the good is chosen rationally, understanding the values implied and in a creative way, this provokes an interior joy that springs from doing something good. The input of the passions in some moral virtues adds to the joy because the good is done with passion. Even in a virtuous act that involves sadness, as in pity, which contributes to charity, there is an interior spiritual joy that affirms the bodily reaction of sadness caused by somebody else's suffering. The permanence of the *habitus* in virtue does not mean the following of routine and stereotypes, since the *habitus* is creative. All the moral virtues require the guiding input of the cardinal virtue of prudence, which assures the creative transfer from intention, through occasional deliberation, to decision and execution. To prevent a deformed understanding of prudence, which often is reduced to the act of caution, it would be appropriate to rename it as "creative resourcefulness." That resourcefulness expresses a personal culture of responsibility and contributes to the growth of the liberty of quality.¹¹ The virtuous person is always startling because he perceives challenges that others fail to notice and reacts to them with full inventiveness. That is why it is easier to guess the reactions of those who are mechanical and stodgy in life than the unpredictable creativeness of the virtuous. Having said this, it is not surprising that many people fail to cross the threshold of virtue, or even vice. They are moved by spontaneous passions or by others, and when they do something good, this is because events have forced them to do so, rather than as a result of a thought out personal choice.¹² And when they fall into evil, this is because their weakness has drawn them, but they are not necessarily creative, or therefore vicious, in evil.

Aquinas distinguished clearly between the acquired and the infused virtues. Acquired virtues focus on the goods of the society of this world, and they are the result of human effort. The infused virtues are given by God as a gift of grace and they bring one into the communion of saints. What differentiates them in practice is the mode of functioning of reason. In the infused virtues, reason sees beyond natural arguments because it is open to a higher divine rule.¹³ If it is true that Aquinas's moral synthesis

¹¹ Cf. Servais Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne. Sa méthode, son contenu, son histoire*, (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1985), 355–379.

¹² Cf. Michel Labourdette, *Cours de la théologie morale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2010), 303.

¹³ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 63, a. 4: "It is evident the measure of desires appointed by a rule of human reason is different from that appointed by a divine rule" (Hughes, vol. 23, 1969).

was made in the light of the new law of the Gospel, that is the law of grace,¹⁴ and not just in the light of the natural law, meaning that it is a theology and not a philosophy of action, it follows that the long discussion of the virtues is a presentation of the fecundity of grace. The moral virtues are therefore viewed primarily as being directly infused by God,¹⁵ but with human consent¹⁶ and collaboration in their development. This teaching of Aquinas has been followed by the Catechism of Trent, which spoke about the “retinue of all the virtues” infused in the soul in the moment of justification, that is, already at baptism.¹⁷

The new *Catechism* is more reticent about this and prefers to follow the position of Duns Scotus.¹⁸ It discusses the moral virtues and then simply states that these virtues “acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace,” and these “human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature.”¹⁹ Thus, it seems that the new *Catechism* accepts that the theological virtues are infused by grace, adapting the human faculties so that they can encounter God, but it stops short at saying that there is a direct initial influence of grace within the moral order. The moral virtues are said to be acquired first by natural effort, and then, eventually, they may be purified by grace. This reserve suggests that the sphere of human morals has to be corrected primarily by natural asceticism and effort, although within a horizon of faith.

The restraint of the new *Catechism*, which prefers here the Scotist position rather than the traditional teaching of Aquinas, shows that the great theological debate of the twentieth century on nature and grace has not yet been thought through down to its conclusions in the realm of

¹⁴ Cf. *ST Ia-IIae*, qq. 106–108; Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne*, 174–194.

¹⁵ The general definition of virtue refers to infused virtues. Cf. *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 55, a. 4, arg. 1: “Virtue is a good quality of mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us without us” (*ibid.*).

¹⁶ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 55, a. 4, ad 6: “Infused virtue is caused in us by God without our action, but not without our consent” (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, trans. J. A. McHugh and C. J. Callan (New York: Joseph Wagner 1956), 188 (part 2, ch. 2, q. 5): “This grace is accompanied by a most splendid train of all virtues, which are divinely infused in the soul along with grace.”

¹⁸ Cf. Michael S. Sherwin O.P., “Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues,” *The Thomist* 73 (2009), 29–52.

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter, *CCC*), §§ 1804, 1810, and 1812.

morals. Grace is not to be viewed as an optional extra layer superimposed upon a supposedly self-sufficient nature without really transforming it. While the distinction between the natural and the supernatural order needs to be maintained, defending the dignity of nature and its own capacities, grace has to be affirmed as working within nature, and as being an overarching gift of God that was planned even before nature was created and that leads to an end that surpasses nature (cf. Eph 1:4–5; 1 Pt 1:18–20).²⁰ The fecundity of grace within the moral order should not be lost as theological reflection veers between the two extremes of quietism and Pelagian naturalism. Avoiding such loss is precisely what the theological category of the infused moral virtues tries to do, showing how the gift of grace may seep into the ethos, generating virtues, including those that are located within the passions. Failure to present this due to the unique focus of philosophical ethics (even virtue ethics, which is still philosophical ethics), leaves the person lost in moral disorder on his own. If the theology of morals is to be of any use, it has to describe the cooperation with grace precisely where the sinner and the addict need that grace most. According to Aquinas, the moral teaching offered in the Church is not given only to convince about values. It is there to show how the grace of the Holy Spirit can be used in the face of moral challenges.²¹

Vice, Sin, and Addiction

Having stressed the creativeness of virtue in which the *habitus* is active, the same has to be said about vice. A true vice is a fruit of an evil *habitus* and not merely of a bad habit, and so it is inventive. It is not mechanically automatic, but elective, even though it may come with spontaneous facility. A vice is thought out and its evil is consciously cultivated. The fact that one has acquired a vice is no excuse, because it adds to the

²⁰ Cf. the illuminating work of Lawrence Feingold (*The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* [Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010]).

²¹ This is one of the functions of the secondary element of the new law. Cf. *ST* Ia-IIae, q. 106, a. 1: “There do however belong to the New Law certain elements which in a way dispose us for the grace of the Holy Spirit, and some which are concerned with its exercise. These may be considered secondary in the New Law, and Christ’s faithful had to be instructed about them both orally and in writing, both as regards matters of faith and as regards actions” (C. Ernst, vol. 30, 1972). Wojciech Giertych, “Theological Ethics or Moral Theology?” in *Camminare nella Luce. Prospettive della teologia morale a partire da Veritatis splendor*, ed. L. Melina and J. Noriega, (Rome: Lateran University Press, 2004), 537–563.

malice of the sin. It is possible to sin out of malice, not having yet a vice, but a sin that flows from a vice is always malicious. The vicious person has neither the unconsciousness of the sinner sinning out of culpable ignorance, nor the anguish of the sinner sinning out of weakness. He has not just “fallen into” sin. Malicious action, flowing from an installed and cultivated vice, may be completely void of passion and done in cold blood or it may incorporate the force of disordered passions. Since vice is cultivated, after conversion, the truly vicious person will become a great saint, because such an individual has the capacity to integrate all the richness of the psychic forces in view of the chosen purpose. Not many people arrive at such psychic coherence within the evil that they commit. Generally sinfulness is more superficial and incoherent.

Aquinas differentiated theoretically between sin and fault, even though already in his time the two terms were often identified in common parlance. *Peccatum* (sin) refers to a human action that is intrinsically irrational. *Culpa* (fault) refers to a sin that is willed.²² It is possible that an individual may commit a sinful action as a result of external pressure and so there will be no fault, or limited fault, in the action, even though the action itself will be evil and will generate evil repercussions.²³ (An abortion forced by a parent upon a young and confused teenager may involve a limited *culpa* on the part of the unfortunate girl, but it will be a *peccatum* that will be remembered in the years to come.)

The sins of weakness are sins in which the passions are the driving force. The passions elicit a movement that then influences the cognition and the will. Such sinners may have good judgment, but they cannot resist temptations because, in the final moment, their passions draw the free choice, eclipsing the light of the conscience. These sins are also willed, because had they not been willed, there would have been no fault, but the initiative coming from the passions is so strong that the free choice chooses to set aside the light of the conscience and proceeds to sinful action.²⁴ Repeated sins of weakness, if they are not subjected

²² Thomas Aquinas, *The De Malo of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. R. Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), q. 2 a. 2: “And we should note that the three things—evil, sin and moral wrong—are related to one another as more and less general. . . . The privation of form or right order or due measure in anything . . . has the nature of evil. But we call sins acts lacking due order or form or measure. . . . But sin has the nature of moral wrong only because it is voluntary.”

²³ Wojciech Giertych, “Free Will, Addiction, and Moral Culpability,” *Addictive and Compulsive Behaviors: Seventh Workshop for Bishops*, ed. Edward J. Furton (Boston: The National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2000), 113–124.

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, trans. J. V. McGlynn, vol. 2 (Indianapolis/

to repentance and control, may easily become sins of malice, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. The accumulation of sins of weakness does not have to result in the acquisition of a cultivated vice, since these sins flow from uncontrolled and uncontrollable passion, but they may generate a habituation in sin, an automatic attraction for it, stimulating psychic mechanisms that do not necessarily have their origin in the reason and will.

Addiction normally is the result of weakness, rather than of malice. It is an excessive, disordered attraction to some sedative that temporarily alleviates anxieties and pain flowing from some moral or psychic disorder. Those who regularly succumb to moral failures out of weakness are tormented by them. They feel the anguish, and yet they cannot liberate themselves from sin, which draws them, and which they do not approve. Thus they drown the anguish with some small or great drug, which only confirms and renews the anguish. What is it therefore that blocks the good will and prevents the handling of the passion by virtue? Aquinas notes that, in the sacrament of penance, the aversion against God that is present in every mortal sin is corrected, but the disordered conversion towards sinful action may remain as an internal disposition, even though it is weakened.²⁵ Thus, being in a state of grace, in which the infused moral virtues are granted by God, does not immediately ensure against contrary internal dispositions flowing from previous sinful acts, and these

Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), q. 17, art. 1 ad 4: “[T]he judgment of conscience consists simply in knowledge, whereas the judgment of free choice consists in the application of knowledge to the inclination of the will. This is the judgment of choice. Thus, it sometimes happens that the judgment of free choice goes astray, but not the judgment of conscience. For example, one debates something which presents itself to be done here and now and judges, still speculating as it were in the realm of principles, that it is evil. . . . However, when he comes to apply this to act, many circumstances relevant to the act present themselves from all sides, for instance, the pleasure of fornication, by the desire of which reason is constrained, so that its dictates may not issue into choice. Thus, one errs in choice and not in conscience.”

²⁵ *ST* IIIa, q. 86, a. 5: “[T]he fault of mortal sin is pardoned through grace reversing the turning of the mind from God. Yet even when grace has done this, there can still remain that which arises as the result of the inordinate turning to a corruptible good. . . . Therefore there is no reason why, once sin has been forgiven, certain dispositions caused from previous acts may not yet remain. These are called after-effects of sin. Nevertheless, they continue in a weakened or diminished state, not having man in their grip. Indeed they persist more as dispositions than as habits . . . ” (T. C. O’Brien, vol. 60, 1966).

may prevent the joy and facility in good action.²⁶ Absolution does not automatically free from addictions.

Thus, the regular sinner constantly falls, sometimes crying out in his weakness, and yet he encounters resistances that disable him from adhering to the true good, from growing in virtue and in personal liberty. The addict is enslaved in his disorder. Why is this so? Succumbing constantly to weakness, drawn not by conscious vice but by disordered passions, he is moved by other causes than ill-will and so his fault may be limited, but the disruptive effects of the *peccatum* and its enslaving power will be manifest. What is the nature of these internal mechanisms that are the consequences of habituated sin, and how can one be free from them? Is the compulsive sinner sick and therefore not morally responsible for his disordered actions because they have physiological causes which need medical treatment? Or is he constitutionally healthy, yet disordered on the spiritual level, needing a process of deeper conversion rather than one of healing? Or are the obstacles against the good on the psychic level, somehow combining the physiological and spiritual levels and influencing them? Experience shows that whoever is an addict is always an addict. Even when, through appropriate spiritual and psychological direction and medical aid, the addict returns to moral and psychic balance, the psychic, and even physiological, addictive inclination remains. A non-drinking alcoholic will therefore have to maintain abstinence, because there are in him permanent psychic, and even neurobiological, changes that have made him weak in this particular field.

Why are the Infused Moral Virtues so Weak?

Having said this, we still face the crux of the theological problem. If the infused moral virtues operating in all the dimensions of the ethos are a gift of grace, why are they so weak? Why do they seem to be nonexistent in cases of addiction? Not only those baptized Christians who have consciously and willingly locked themselves in corrupt perversity, but also those who struggle and pray and receive the sacraments and do not approve their own sinful actions sometimes experience the pain of being

²⁶ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 65, a. 3 ad 2: "It sometimes happens that a man who has a habit finds difficulty in acting from it, and consequently feels no pleasure and satisfaction in the act, because of some extrinsic impediment. . . . Likewise difficulty may be experienced in the performance of the habits of the infused moral virtues, because of certain contrary dispositions surviving from previous acts" (Hughes, vol. 23, 1969).

as if enslaved by some great or small idol. Does their problem consist in the fact that they have not received an appropriate catechesis and so do not understand the issues involved? Or are there other spiritual, psychic, or neurological factors that are at play? It would be simple if a clear explanation would have a healing effect. But not even theological knowledge is a Gnostic cure. It can only offer the grammar of the fecundity of grace, but the living out of that grace requires a humble personal relationship with the Redeemer and an involvement of the entire human psyche, gradually freed from distorted resistances. Theological reflection rooted in a clear perception of the workings of the moral psyche is useful but, in itself, insufficient. It may be clarifying to remember that the theological anthropology of the acting person offered by Aquinas is modeled on the glorified humanity of Christ, and it is then illuminated from within with the help of precise philosophical conclusions drawn mainly from Aristotle. As such, it offers a magnificent horizon, showing how a mature person, transformed by grace, who has become an image, an icon of God painted by God Himself, functions.²⁷ It is not surprising, therefore, that an average individual has difficulty in locating himself within that synthesis grounded on the supernatural organism composed of the infused virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit and beatitudes, because the final stage is not the same as that of the beginner, who perceives his own weakness with greater force than the fruitfulness of grace. But a clear understanding of the intricacies of the transformed moral psyche is useful, because it may help in the individuation of erroneous steps and obstacles that may have arisen and lead not to sanctity but to anxieties and their concomitant addictions.

In discussing the infused moral virtues, Fr. Michael Sherwin, O.P. came to a paradoxical conclusion:

The post-conversion Christian . . . has the power to overcome his inclination to sin, even though he might still not experience this power as something he can exercise with ease, promptness, and joy. In other words the beginner finds himself in the unique position of having virtues that he does not psychologically feel like he has.²⁸

²⁷ *ST Ia-IIae*, prol.: “[W]e go on to look at this [His] image, that is to say, at man” (Gilby, vol. 16, 1969).

²⁸ Sherwin, “Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice,” 46.

The addict who has just returned to the state of grace has received real but still imperfect infused moral virtues that need to be cultivated and strengthened before they will supply the ease of upright living. Such a claim may be made within a theological discourse, even though, in the purely philosophical reflection that was typical of ancient Greek thought, this conclusion would be unthinkable. The acquired moral virtue is either perfect or inexistent. But an infused moral virtue may persist in an undeveloped stage in a soul that is still struggling against serious difficulties.²⁹

An important aspect of Christian catechesis is making converts aware that they already have received grace, which is working within them, even though they do not feel this. It is imperative that one believes in the existence of received grace and its accompanying infused moral virtues, even when returning sinfulness seems to suggest the opposite. The adherence in faith to the truth about the reality of grace, precisely when the disordered psyche and contrition painfully remind about committed sins and when maybe the accuser tries to lock the individual in pessimist self-condemnation, is extremely liberating. This is precisely the role of the Paraclete, who defends against a depressive, despairing conviction that there is no way out of the weakness. The Holy Spirit offers hope.

Theological reflection that has the horizon of a grace-enriched anthropology and refers to the progressive experience of saints³⁰ may try to understand how the infused moral virtues can be activated, even by those who are seemingly locked in addiction, and also what are the factors that can erect a resistance against them.

It is said that, in a good handling of the emotions that contributes to the growth of virtue, the truth of the situation recognized by the practical reason in the very moment of action is decisive. How and according to what criteria is this truth perceived? It is not a general scientific or philosophical truth, and not even a general ethical truth that can be learnt from books³¹ and that is measured by its concordance with objective, unchanging reality, since practical truth is of a different type.

²⁹ Michael S. Sherwin O.P., "The Return to Virtue: Challenges and Opportunities," in *Dominicans and the Challenge of Thomism*, ed. Michał Paluch, O.P. and Piotr Lichacz (Warszawa: Instytut Tomistyczny, 2012), 196.

³⁰ The Thomistic synthesis offers a speculative vision viewed from the summit. The Carmelite spiritual tradition tries to describe the progressive stages of spiritual growth.

³¹ In the *Prologue* of part IIa-IIae of the *Summa*, dealing with the specifics of Christian morals, Aquinas wrote: "Generalities about morals have a limited value because actions are so individual" (O'Brien, vol. 32, 1974).

It does not concern universals, but concrete contingent acts, which are always located in some circumstances, and which at present are nonexistent, and are only about to exist. The practical truth, in its essence, is a judgment about the event that is to take place, and this judgment is made immediately, spontaneously, through the interior inclination of the virtuous person.³² The virtuous act is similar to that of an artist or sportsman, which is done immediately, even though a theoretical reflection about it is possible. The judgment that takes place within a moral virtue is intuitive, suggested by an emotion, concrete, ascertaining the value involved, and in some sense is empirical, for it recognizes that the intended act is good.³³

Since within the virtuous act there is a practical cognition, it must have some criterion of its truthfulness that differs from the criterion of theoretical knowledge. Where is it? How is the individual to know that precisely such an action or such an expression of emotions is appropriate in the particular moment, in accord with the truth of the situation? Responding to this question, Aquinas stated that the truth of the practical reason is found in its concordance with the domesticated emotions and with the rectified movement of the will that is animated by love.³⁴ Thus, within the subjectivity of the acting person there is an internal attractiveness towards the practical truth that is “connatural” for the emotions because the emotions themselves suggest it.³⁵

³² ST Ia, q. 1, a. 6 ad 3: “[T]wo ways of passing judgment. This may be arrived at from a bent that way, as when a person who possesses the habit of a virtue rightly commits himself to what should be done in consonance with it, because he is already in sympathy with it; hence . . . the virtuous man himself sets the measure and standards for human acts. Alternatively the judgment may be arrived at through a cognitive process, as when a person soundly instructed in moral science can appreciate the activity of virtues he does not himself possess” (Gilby, vol. 1, 1964).

³³ Rafael-Tomas Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination chez Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1980), 70–71.

³⁴ ST Ia-IIae, q. 57, a. 5 ad 3: “The speculative intellect is true when it conforms to objective reality. . . . On the other hand, the practical intellect is true when it conforms to a right appetite. This conformity has no place in regard to necessary matters . . . but only in those contingent matters which we can effect, whether they are internal activities or external works” (Hughes, vol. 23, 1969); q. 56, a. 3 ad 1: “[V]irtue . . . depends in some way on love, inasmuch as it depends on the will, the primordial motion of which is love” (ibid.).

³⁵ João Baptista Mezzalana, “Amore, virtù e ‘conoscenza per connaturalità’ sfumature della conoscenza affettiva in San Tommaso d'Aquino,” in *Persona e natura nell'agire morale: memoriale di Cracovia, studi, contributi*, ed. Juan José Pérez-Soba and Paweł Gałuszka (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, cop. 2013), 347–354.

Is this classical explanation satisfactory? It seems to suggest a vicious circle. The cognition of the practical truth requires an ordered affectivity, and the affectivity is ordered only when it inclines toward the practical truth. Consequently, it is said that the moral virtues require a well-functioning prudence,³⁶ but prudence requires the existence of moral virtues for the perception of the practical truth, because, if there is disorder in the affectivity, the perception of the practical truth is clouded and prudence cannot function.³⁷ Does not the difficulty with the moral virtues, whether infused or acquired, lie precisely here? It is said that they exist when everything is functioning well, and when everything is not functioning well it seems that the virtues do not exist. What then is the individual suffering from moral disorder to do so that finally he will grow in virtue? He would prefer if his affectivity did not disorder him so that he could move towards the appropriate good, but this will only be possible when he will not be disordered! He would want his will to be animated by love, but that will be possible only when it will be animated by love! The addict experiences the fact that he is locked in a trap, and the teaching on the virtues does not liberate him. Furthermore, if he constantly hears moralizing words of criticism, suggesting a culpable weakness of the will, the sadness caused by the perplexity leads him to have recourse to the alleviating means that gives a temporal relief, and thus he falls into even greater addiction.

In response to this conundrum several issues have to be addressed.

The Primacy and Quality of the Theological Life

First of all, it has to be remembered that the dexterous functioning of the infused moral virtues is not the end of Christian life. It is not moral perfection in itself that is to be sought, but the encounter with the living God. An individual who is tormented by some moral, even addictive, weakness may still maintain an attachment to God that will lead to sanctity. In fact, God sometimes leaves a thorn in the flesh that reminds about humility and the need for basing oneself on the mysterious grace of God (2 Cor 12:7). This permission of weakness is a sign of divine

³⁶ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 57, a. 5: “[P]rudence . . . is necessary for a good life” (Hughes, vol. 23, 1969).

³⁷ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 58, a. 5: “[R]ight judgment about things to be done, namely prudence, requires that a man has moral virtue”, and ad 3: “Prudence not only helps us to be of good counsel, but also to judge and command well. This is not possible unless interference from the passions, destroying the judgment and command of prudence, be removed; and this is done by moral virtue” (ibid.).

concern that saves from the worst evil, which is the self-exclusion from grace through pride.³⁸ It is not therefore the moral virtues, acquired or infused, that are to be in the center of attention, but the theological virtues that ensure a contact with God. When faith is formed by charity, meaning that it involves a movement towards God—in *Deum*, because of God, who is loved above all—this movement in time transforms the entire moral ethos. All, in particular those who experience the slavery of sin and addiction, need to focus primarily not on the sin from which they would like to be freed, nor on the opposite virtue that they hope for, but on the friendly relationship with God that is to be maintained. The primacy of the theological virtues liberates from self-centeredness and from self-condemnation because, in their exercise, there is a counting in faith on the saving power of Christ, who is trusted. That is why true contemplative prayer in which faith is exercised is so fundamental. The sinner needs to believe in the supernatural quality of the faith that he has received as a divine gift and that enables him to access the power of God (Mk 5:30). Regular prayer in which the believer rests in God, believing that a contact has been established, opens to the mysterious workings of grace.

Belief in the redemption generates hope, the theological virtue that gears the will towards a graced mysterious future unfolding itself in life. St. John of the Cross noted that the theological virtue of hope grows in the soul when attachment to memories is purified.³⁹ The capacity to remember is a natural psychic function that is to be cherished. But the soul has the inclination to hold on to memories, good or bad, concerning self or others, and that attachment blocks the spiritual capacity of going forward in life. Just as it is necessary to let go of good memories, so as to affront new challenges and leave space for others, so it is necessary to let go of memories of past abuses that had been suffered and of past sins that had been committed. Forgetting is not the same as forgiving.

³⁸ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, 2 Cor, 2 Co., ch. 12, l. 3, 472: “Therefore, because the matter of this vice, that is pride, is mainly found in things that are good, because its matter is good, God sometimes permits his elect to be prevented by something on their part, e.g., infirmity or some other defect, and sometimes even mortal sin, from obtaining such a good, in order that they be so humbled on this account that they will not take pride in it, and that being thus humiliated, they may recognize that they cannot stand by their own powers.”

³⁹ Cf. M. M. Labourdette, *La foi théologique et la connaissance mystique d’après Saint Jean de la Croix* (St. Maximin: Revue Thomiste, 1935) and *L’espérance: “Grand cours” de théologie morale, Tome 9* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2012), 80.

Forgetting is a psychic moment, whereas forgiving is spiritual. Belief in the redeeming power of the Paschal Mystery made present in the sacraments allows for the disentanglement from paralyzing memories and from committed sins. It can be observed that those who do not believe in the Redemption are often hooked on the memory of past sufferings, and that memory is then a source of constant pain.⁴⁰ Psychological training and counseling may partially alleviate this pain, but it will not liberate from it, so long as the Redemption is ignored.

The virtues of faith and hope lead to charity, the divine virtue that enables the befriending of God and of others who are also the friends of God. The love of God needs to be nourished and developed so that it will structure the main focus of life. Within charity, all human needs can be trustfully and ardently presented to God. The overcoming of daily difficulties can be offered to God as a gift. Charity does not require the denial of self, a sort of disinterested approach towards God. The perception of one's real needs and desires and an approval of them, together with an ascetic avoidance of attributing an idolatrous status to them, have a place within the loving relationship with God. The conviction that human nature is intrinsically corrupt and so self-centered that it has to be absolutely denied within charity is a Lutheran idea that inappropriately sets *agapé* against *eros*. To love God, one has to love oneself and others in view of God. Human nature, together with its passionate desires and needs, has therefore a prime place within the love of God because that nature is good, created by God.⁴¹ The relationship with God, sustained in trustful prayer and confidence in the power of grace, grants a mystical dimension to life, and so also to efforts of self-control. Asceticism can only work when it is simultaneously mystical. Even at the beginner stage, when moral disorder is enticing and drawing into its trap, the believing trusting Christian can engage in acts of love that humanly seem impossible, and yet are possible due to the power of grace.⁴²

⁴⁰ This can be clearly observed in the Jewish approach to suffering.

⁴¹ Twomey, *Moral Theology after Humanae Vitae*, 150–152.

⁴² Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, vol. 3 (trans. R. W. Schmidt), q. 24, a. 12, ad sc. 6: “Free choice can accordingly have choice and deliberation not only about the matters for which its own power suffices but also about those for which it needs divine help.” See also Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Splendor of the Truth *Veritatis splendor* (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1993), § 103.

The Functioning of the Will

The Second issue that needs to be addressed is the correction of the understanding of the will. It is not to be expected to be endowed with a force that it does not have. Multiple difficulties with traditional Catholic moral theology derive, as Servais Pinckaers has shown, from a Nominalist understanding of the nature of the will. Once Aquinas's interpretation of the will is understood, his presentation of the psychology of moral agency, of the virtues, and of the role of grace all fall into place. An excessive voluntarism generates false expectations about willpower, and then when seemingly the will is forced, in fact most often, it is the emotions of the irascible appetite that are stimulated, and this leads to psychic short-circuits. Some temporary alleviating solutions may then be sought for, but this will not be a true internal liberty.

The main function of the will is not the obedient execution of externally imposed obligations, but love, and that love springs from within the will. The will primarily is not a force that exerts pressure on self and on others. First of all, it experiences impression, because it is attracted towards the good. This means that the freedom of the will is not arbitrary, absolute, and indifferent to value. The will has an internal determination towards happiness, which is its final end, and towards such objects that correspond with the finalities of all the other human faculties. These include the truth known by the intellect and the appropriate objects of the passions and the body.⁴³ Thus, the will is spontaneously drawn towards the most profound and universal goods, which natural law reflection tries to enumerate. Whereas, on a more superficial level, dealing with particular goods that may be various, the will is not determined towards any given object. In this particular undetermined movement, the will does not function alone. It works in cooperation with the reason as it specifies the object of its willing, as it exercises the willing, and as that willing is tied or not tied to the ultimate finality that is appropriate for the will and the other objects that are necessary for happiness.⁴⁴ In

⁴³ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 10, art. 1: "The beginnings of its [the will's] motions has to be something willed naturally. This is the good as common to all things . . . also the ultimate end. . . . Moreover it embraces whatsoever answers to the nature of the person willing. . . . By nature he wills all that matches his entire ability, not just his will, for instance to know the truth, to be, to live, and so forth, indeed all that relates to the integrity he was born to have; the universal object of will embraces all these as so many particular goods" (Gilby, vol. 17, 1970).

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, vol. 3, q. 22, art. 6: "Since the will is said to be free inasmuch as it is not necessitated, the freedom of the will can be viewed in three respects: (1) as regards its act, inasmuch as it can will or not will; (2) as regards

these three moments, the liberty of specification, the liberty of exercise, and the tying of what has been chosen to the deepest innate inclinations, the will cooperates with reason. As the will repeatedly works with the reason, facility in creatively choosing appropriate goods is acquired. It follows, therefore, that growth in the liberty of quality is possible. Liberty within the person is not an unchangeable, innate given. It needs to be formed. “Freedom itself needs to be set free.”⁴⁵

It is worth noting that Aquinas rarely uses the term “free-will”—*libera voluntas*—by which, paradoxically, he means the determination of the will towards that which is in accord with its nature.⁴⁶ His preferred term for human liberty is *liberum arbitrium*, the “free choice,” which denotes the joint action of the reason and the will.⁴⁷ The fact that the reason and the will function together in a non-sequential manner, mutually influencing one another, means that the free choice is creative. The stages of intention, occasional deliberation, decision, and execution within action are all simultaneously both volitional and rational. Thus there is room for a perception and creative adherence to the true value in each one of these three or four stages. Prudence, the virtue of creative resourcefulness, assures the passage through all these stages and stimulates virtuous activity.⁴⁸ Real moral life is not reduced to volitional obedience to the norms, that is, to a rubber-stamp execution of their commands as they are presented by the conscience. It does not deny the moral norms that point to the major values and exclude evil, nor does it deny the light of conscience as it alerts to moral challenges. Rather, virtuous living involves something more: the creative free choosing of the good in all

its object, inasmuch as it can will this or that, even if one is the opposite of the other; and (3) as regards its ordination to the end, inasmuch as it can will good or evil.”

⁴⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, § 86; Servais Pinckaers, *Les sources de la morale chrétienne*, p. 355–399; and Wojciech Giertych, “Conscience and the *Liberum Arbitrium*,” in *Crisis of Conscience*, ed. John M. Haas (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996), 51–78.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, vol. 3, q. 24, art. 1 ad 20: “[W]hen there is the question of the objects of appetite, we do not judge about the last end by any judgment involving discussion and examination, but we naturally approve of it. Concerning it there is no choice, but there is the will. We have in its regard a free will (*liberam voluntatem*) . . . but not a free judgment, properly speaking, since it does not fall under choice.”

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, q. 24, art. 4: “Free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) accordingly does not designate a habit but the power of the will and reason—one is subordinated to the other.”

⁴⁸ Cf. Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason; Aristotle, Action and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

its richness. Failure to perceive this inventive moment in moral agency and the second role of reason, after conscience, within the free choice has limited moral awareness to a mere execution of obligations by an obedient or disobedient, supposedly absolutely indifferent and solitary will. Such a simplified understanding of moral responsibility does not invite growth in virtue and can never be fully satisfying. In fact, the suggestion that everything depends uniquely upon sheer will, which has to be forced if it is weak, generates frustration and then the search for some form of escape.

To grow in virtue—that is, to grow in internal liberty—it is imperative that an innate, indeterminate, and absolute liberty, independent of all the other faculties, be not attributed to the will, for all failures are then immediately and uniquely blamed upon the culpable will. The will is not locked in absolute, indifferent isolation, and so it is susceptible to external influences, and these do not deform the dignity of the will. The will needs the support of reason, which supplies the motives for action, and it is also open to be influenced by emotional dynamism, and all this is normal. But, since we are marked by the consequences of original sin, we need time to grow in liberty, without forcing the will, learning how to use its dynamism together with other spiritual and psychic forces. Virtues can be cultivated only within a respect for the inherent finalities of the body and soul, of the sexual drive and all the other passions. The input of all the human faculties as they cooperate within the free choice needs to be affirmed and felt as good, and only then repeated acts that flow from mature and reasoned choices will contribute to the rooting of virtues in the psyche. If some addictive dependency has appeared, the fragment of true liberty that has survived needs to be developed, thereby contributing to growth in virtue. Life experience and the joy of inventive generosity that is in accord with the natural finalities of the human being form the virtues, the sum of which determines the personal character.

The Christian remembers, of course, that the will is also susceptible to another correcting influence, the movement of grace. Divine influence cannot be felt in any way, but it may be recognized in faith and invited into action. Since God is the creator of human nature, he may act within the human will without in any way deforming or manipulating it. The first cause may act within the second cause in such a way that the second cause loses nothing of its dignity as it is moved by the first cause.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁹ *ST* Ia, q. 83, a. 1 ad 3: “God is the first cause on which both the natural and free agents depend. And just as his initiative does not prevent natural causes from being natural, so it does not prevent voluntary action from being voluntary but

acts of the infused moral virtues are therefore fully human and fully divine at the same time.

The Practical Judgment

And finally, for action to be good and contributing to the growth of virtue, the instinctive practical judgment of the moral act has to be in accord with objective truth as it can be known by the speculative reason. The same reason sometimes functions in the speculative mode and sometimes in the practical mode focused on the contingent act that is about to take place. Within a moral act, there is an immediate practical judgment coupled with an inclination towards what is subjectively perceived as the truth of the practical action. Aquinas uses a number of terms—such as *inclinatio*, *aptitudo*, *proportio*, *amor naturalis*, *complacentia*, *coaptatio*, *unio*, *consonantia*, and *harmonia*—to describe this psychic inclination.⁵⁰ The richness of the employed terminology points to the instinctive character of this movement, which is far from a purely rational reaction to arguments of cold logic. This is because this immediate inclination results also from the specific physiological characteristics of the individual. In the perception of the practical truth, the sensitive usefulness judgment (*translated sometimes as the “power of cogitation”*) comes into play also.

This sensitive judgment is one of the internal sensitive cognitive powers (along with memory, imagination, and the *sensus communis* that gathers together the impressions of the external senses). The sensitive usefulness judgment is called the *vis aestimativa* when it appears in animals. It instinctively suggests what is useful as food or building material for a nest and what represents a danger. Since, in humans, this judgment is marked by rational knowledge, it is called the *vis cogitativa*. It seems to coincide with the practical reason, as it issues a judgment about future action, and hence the terminological concurrence. But the two are, in fact, not identical, because the *vis cogitativa* has its specific physiological location in the brain. It functions, however, as if it were a spiritual faculty of the mind, because instinctively it collates justifications and, together with memory (the power of experience) it grasps the meaning of a sensitively ascertained object, suggesting a “connatural” practical truth that is appropriate for action and emotional reaction.⁵¹ Contempo-

rather makes it precisely this” (Sutter, vol. 11, 1970).

⁵⁰ Caldera, 62–63.

⁵¹ ST Ia, q. 78, a. 4: “And so what we call natural instinct (*aestimativa*) in other animals in men we call cogitation (*cogitativa*), which comes upon intentions of the kind in question through a process of comparison. Which is why it is also called the particular reason, to which medical scientists assign a fixed part of the

rary neurological studies of the brain have localized the organ through which moral decisions are made. It is known that its wounding impairs the capacity for practical moral reasoning.⁵² Neuroscience tells us only *that* the brain enables moral reasoning; it does not tell us *why* a person gives a particular reason to justify an action.⁵³ The brain has a great plasticity, and as a result of past actions, personal decisions, and external factors, neuronal connections are made within the brain, engaging its various parts. These connections are in constant flux. They condition the sensitive reaction that instinctively judges the eventual usefulness of the perceived object.⁵⁴ The brain is not to be identified with the mind, even though it is its necessary foundation. The brain is *embodied* in the body, but it is also *embedded* in the person, who is subject to various external influences, suggestions, and rational arguments, some of which are in accord with human nature and its intrinsic finality and others which are not. These external, psychic, environmental, and social factors contribute in a dynamic way to the generation and the transformation

body, the middle of the head; for it compares individual intentions the way the reasoning intellect compares universal intentions.”; q. 81 a. 3: “In man . . . the power of cogitation (*cogitativa*) takes the place of instinct (*aestimativa*); some call this the particular reason because it relates and groups particular experiences. So man’s sense appetite naturally responds to it” (Suttor, vol. 11, 1970); Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, vol. 2, q. 14 a. 1 ad 9: “The cogitative power (*cogitativa*) is that which is highest in the sensitive part of man, and, thus, sense in some way comes in contact with the intellective part so that it participates in something of that which is lowest in the intellective part, namely discursive reason. . . . For this reason, also, the cogitative power is called the particular reason”; *ibid.*, q. 15 a. 1: “But sometimes, the cogitative power, which is a power of the sensitive soul, is called reason, since it makes comparisons between individual forms, just as reason, properly so called, does between universal forms . . . This has a definite organ, the middle cell of the brain”; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I. Litzinger (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), bk. 6, l. 9, 1249: “Because singulars are properly known by the senses, it is necessary that man should have experience of these singulars (which we say are principles and ultimates) not just by exterior but by interior sense as well . . . the sensory power of judging (*vim cogitativam vel aestimativam*), called particular reason”; *ibid.*, bk. 6, l. 9, 1255: “[S]o in particulars unconditional judgment about singulars belongs to the sensory power of judgment (*vis cogitativa*) called understanding (*intellectus*).”

⁵² It is described as the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) (Walter Glannon, *Brain, Body, and Mind: Neuroethics with a Human Face* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011]), 99–106.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁴ Rhonheimer, “Ragione morale, persona e virtù,” 185–188.

of neuronal connections within the brain,⁵⁵ which then condition the functioning of the sensitive usefulness judgment.

In practice, therefore, the cognition of the sensitive usefulness judgment is collated with the judgment of practical reason. Their functioning in a healthy individual is such that the instinctive recognition of the practical truth and its cognition by the practical reason are basically the same. A pianist, who is moved by his artistic sense, hits the key immediately, with no preceding rational reflection.⁵⁶ Speaking in a known foreign language, one immediately finds the appropriate word. The ping pong player reacts to the approaching ball more quickly than he would be able to think about it. Similarly, in virtuous action, the appropriate reaction is found directly, as it expresses the integration of the reason and will with the emotion in the grasping of the good. In technical and moral proficiency, these reactions, the meaning of which can be theoretically pondered, become automatic precisely because the sensitive judgment of the usefulness of the object and the practical recognition of the truth about it by reason combine.

This Thomistic explanation could be followed through, and so it could be said that a sort of *habitus* is formed in the sensitive *vis cogitativa* that inclines towards the specific contents of this automatic cognition. It has to be called a *quasi-habitus*, rather than a normal *habitus*, because this automatic judgment is more the fruit of neuronal instinctive reactions than of conscious choice. It functions immediately, but the fact that the instinctive cognitions are specifically such is a consequence of internal bodily dispositions, of previous conscious actions, and of accustoming, as well as of external environmental and cultural influences. Thus, many of these contributing factors are conscious. It is no surprise, therefore, that some people have developed a greater facility in a given virtue than others, just as some people have technical and artistic capacities that others do not have. This is because their temperament and personal histories differ.

The inclination that springs from the *quasi-habitus* in the usefulness judgment is experienced as being “connatural,” but it does not necessarily incline to that which objectively is in accord with human nature. If it corresponds with the fundamental finality of human nature, it contrib-

⁵⁵ Glannon, *Brain, Body, and Mind*, 11–40. Physiological information concerning the neuroscience of ethics given by Glannon is interesting, but his ethics of neuroscience is unacceptable because it is based on an erroneous metaphysics of the person.

⁵⁶ My piano teacher used to say that we should not follow the Gospel rule “Search and you shall find.” The key is to be found without searching.

utes to the generation of virtue. If it does not, it impedes the virtue.

There are people who protest against appeals to an immutable natural law because they claim that their subjective “nature” is different. There is a kernel of truth in this reaction, because the spontaneous sensitive usefulness judgment, together with its physiological backing, is changeable, and so it may direct towards that which does not correspond to objective human nature. This fact explains the possibility of training animals. Their *vis aestimativa* is manipulated by humans. An animal that appears in the circus does not react as its animal nature dictates, but in accord with the training that it has received from a human. Also in men, the sensitive *vis cogitativa* may be geared in various ways, and so it may incline to objects that are contrary to the basic finality of human nature and its components.

This observation is by no means recent. Aquinas knew about this and he gave examples of distortions in the instinctive judgment of what is pleasurable. Sometimes a sick person has the impression that what is sweet is sour. There are people who, due to a particular alteration of their physiological disposition, find pleasure in eating the soil or coal. There are those who find a “connatural” pleasure in homosexual acts, sexual encounters with animals, or in cannibalism.⁵⁷ It is known today that pedophiles often had been previously victims of this abuse and that this is the origin of their perverse urge. The liberation from such inclinations that are contrary to the true finality of human nature is not easy, because the *quasi-habitus* of the usefulness judgment, rooted in the brain, has been formed in a distorted manner. These inclinations should not be regarded as “natural,” even though they appear to be “connatural.” They contradict the natural finality of the human faculties and their objects, and so they do not lead to deep satisfaction and internal peace. Instead, they generate anxiety, in spite of the fact that the environment may approve of them. Psychic disturbances generated by this anxiety often

⁵⁷ ST Ia-IIae, q. 31, a. 7: “Thus something which is ‘against human nature’ (*contra naturam*), either as regards reason or as regards physical preservation, may happen to be in harmony with the natural needs (*connaturale*) of *this* man because in him nature is ailing. He may be ailing physically: either from some particular complaint, as fever-patients find sweet things bitter, and vice versa; or from some dispositional disorder, as some find pleasure in eating earth or coals. He may be ailing psychologically, as some men by habituation come to take pleasure in cannibalism, or in copulation with beasts or with their own sex, or in other things not accord with human nature” (E. D’Arcy, vol. 20, 1975). Cf. Anthony C. Daly, “Aquinas on Disordered Pleasures and Conditions,” *The Thomist*, 56 (1992): 583–612.

lead to an obsessive search for gratification or for some other means to alleviate the pain. This is an easy step towards addictions that contradict virtue.

The seeming conundrum of moral virtue integrating the emotions with the reason and the will through reference to the practical truth is therefore resolved without a vicious circle. Ordered affectivity can be the criterion of practical truth on the condition that it is understood that affectivity is ordered only when it is in accord with its natural finality, leading towards its appropriate object. But it is known that the practical reason and the *vis cogitativa* do not always incline towards an object that truly corresponds with the natural finality of the will and the emotions. This inclination is sometimes corrupted, and then an object of the instinctive practical cognition is experienced as “connatural,” while in fact it is unnatural. Thus, it generates a resistance against virtue. But what truly is in accord with objective nature elicits a deep and authentic “connaturality” springing from interior coherence, and it is the source of happiness. Nature supports the inclination towards the true good, whereas the distortion of nature disintegrates the person and leads to anxiety. True “connaturality” may, therefore, initially have to struggle against a rooted distorted inclination that had been acquired and is experienced as being “connatural.” Only when false interior psychic mechanisms have been reworked so as to be in accord with the inherent finality of nature will a true “connatural” reaction contributing to virtue appear. The changeability of brain structures, conscious opposition to demoralizing environmental influences, and a religious conversion facilitate in this, but it is known that the plasticity of the brain declines with age, and so liberation from deeply rooted disorders becomes more difficult with time.

This explanation is based upon the philosophical perception that beings are endowed with finality. The fundamental inclination towards appropriate ends is metaphysical and not necessarily psychological, even though conformity with basic finalities elicits psychological reactions. The choice of individual moral acts has, therefore, to take into account the deepest finalities of the will and of the other faculties of the body and soul that incline towards their appropriate objects.⁵⁸ All faculties

⁵⁸ *ST* Ia, q. 78, a. 1 ad 3: “For a thing is desired as it is in reality”, *ibid.*, q. 80, a. 1, ad 3: “each [power of the soul] by natural appetite reaches for the right object” (Suttor, vol. 11, 1970); *ST* Ia-IIae, q. 26, a. 1 ad 3: “[E]verything has a built-in sense of affinity (*connaturalitatem*) with whatever accords with its nature” (Suttor, vol. 19, 1967).

and their objects have an inherent meaning. The finalities of the human composite are not a subject of free choice because they are determined by nature. Nature is given, whereas the means leading to the ends are chosen through the liberty of specification and the liberty of exercise. What is decisive, therefore, is whether the inherent finality of the objects of choice have been perceived and respected, or not, because it is this finality that is the ultimate measure of truth for the practical reason, and it attributes rectitude to the affective faculties engaged in choice.⁵⁹ Returning to the examples of distorted pleasure given by Aquinas, the respect for human life, which is fundamental for human nature, attributes moral value to the choice of means. Thus, the eating of coal or of human flesh is not an appropriate object for the feeling of hunger.

Practical truth that is in accord with the finalities of nature is grasped instinctively as such, and so a specialized intellectual formation is not required for moral rectitude. Whenever the practical truth is recognized and accepted, it generates a resonance in the affectivity that sustains moral virtue. Growth in virtue does not then require any extraordinary effort. It comes about automatically. But where the reason has been geared into scepticism and does not trust its own capacities, and where the *vis cogitativa* has been distorted through an accumulation of sins and external deforming influences, a reference to speculative truths about the finalities of the basic objects of willing and a teaching of the “grammar” of moral action will be useful. But more than a theoretical understanding is needed for moral conversion. The distorted *quasi-habitus* in the *vis cogitativa* has to be undone.

Resistances Against Virtue

When the instinctive perception of the object of practical cognition is incorrect, it elicits a distorted accompanying affective reaction and all this becomes an obstacle to moral virtue. The reasons for this are

⁵⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. 6, l. 2, 1131: “[T]he end and the means pertain to the appetitive faculty, but the end is determined for man by nature. . . . On the contrary the means are not determined for us by nature but are to be investigated by reason. So it is obvious that the rectitude of the appetitive faculty in regard to the end is the measure of truth for the practical reason. According to this the truth of the practical reason is determined by agreement with a right appetitive faculty. But the truth of the practical reason itself is the rule of the appetitive faculty, in regard to the means. According to this, then, the appetitive faculty is called right inasmuch as it pursues the things that reason calls true.”

multiple, both internal and external,⁶⁰ coming from habituation and cultural influences. Deformed inclinations and specific conditionings color the perception of truth. It is known that thinking often follows instinctive inclinations and actions, trying to justify what has been previously decided. This does not mean that change is impossible.⁶¹ A certain type of music may be instinctively appreciated, but an individual can develop a taste for music coming from a different culture. The reactions of a driver in Britain are instinctive, but new reactions can be acquired on the European continent with driving on the right and not on the left. Similarly, liberation from deformed moral reactions is possible⁶² on the condition that the object of the instinctive practical cognition will be perceived in its truth. Sometimes the instinctive perception of the practical truth is only partial, failing to note the fullness of truth and the inherent finality of reality, and this limited perception impedes then the appropriate virtue.

A clear example of this can be seen in the realm of chastity. Human sexuality has two finalities, the unitive and the procreative, both of which have to be recognized by the practical reason as the appropriate object of sexual passion.⁶³ When, due to the endorsement of the contraceptive

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Truth (De veritate)*, vol. 1 (trans. R. W. Mulligan), q. 1, a. 11: “[T]he spontaneous action of a thing always takes place in one way, unless by accident it is impeded intrinsically by some defect or extrinsically by some impediment. Consequently, the judgment of sense about proper sensibles is always true unless there is an impediment in the organ or in the medium.”

⁶¹ *ST Ia*, q. 83, a. 1 ad 5: “[A]ccording to the constitution of the individual, so fulfilment appears to him, for his temperament disposes him to choose or reject a thing. But these dispositions are subject to rational decision” (Suttor, vol. 11, 1970).

⁶² Caldera, 92–94.

⁶³ Bl. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on Human Life *Humanae Vitae*. Cf. the Latin version given in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis LX* (30 Septembris, Cf. the Latin version given in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis LX* (30 Septembris 1968), §§ 11–12, pp. 488–489: “It is necessary that each conjugal act remain ordained in itself to the procreating of human life. “This doctrine... is based on the inseparable connection (*nexu indissolubili*), established by God, which Man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance, both of which are inherent to the marriage act. Due to the intrinsic nature of this connection (*intimam suam rationem*), the conjugal act which unites husband and wife in the closest of bonds renders them also apt (*idoneos*) to bring forth new life, according to laws written into the nature of males and females. And if both of these essential qualities, the unitive and the procreative, are preserved, the use of marriage fully retains its sense of true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme mission of parenthood to which Man is called.” This is my own trans-

mentality, there is an automatic mental and affective exclusion of the procreative moment, the unitive moment acquires an autonomous prominence and becomes a sort of idol. Having a unique status, the unitive moment expects full satisfaction. But, sexual desire reaching out only to a half-truth of its fitting object cannot be true to itself. Such truncated, so-called “safe” sexual passion denies the procreative truth of sexuality, of the sexual partner, and of the responsibility that parenthood entails, and so it does not express true love. It can never therefore be fully satisfying. In consequence, the desire becomes insatiable, constantly demanding gratification, and as a result, it cannot be easily integrated within the virtue of chastity. Thus, it leads to egoist abuses and sexual addiction. It goes without saying that a proper perception of the inherent finalities of sexuality and their emotional approval are necessary for growth in chastity, not only within married life but also in the life of celibates.

The phenomenon of a faulty perception of the object of emotional reactions that appears clearly in sexual addiction can also be discerned in respect to other emotions. The assertive emotions of hope, audacity, and anger supply the psychic force to undertake the challenges of personal and social life. When responsibility for one’s life is understood to be inappropriate because it is totally forbidden by a superior power, the untrue or half-true object of the practical reason does not then meet with a normal emotional reaction that would offer a necessary stimulus in life and would be directed with ease. Such a neurotic blocking of justified aspirations leads to nefarious consequences. People living under totalitarian regimes where personal initiatives and grass-roots social responsibility are deemed to be totally unfitting have a false idea of the object of their psychic energy. In Russia, the internal inhibition of personal aspirations and social activity generates profound psychic wounds. As a result people react with brutality, they can be easily manipulated, and often they fall into alcoholism of proportions unimagined in Western civil societies.⁶⁴

lation of this fragment of the encyclical. Most translations (including those on the Vatican website, and the Polish translation quoted by St. John Paul II in his theology of the body—*Mężczyznę i niewiastę stworzył ich* [Lublin: KUL, 2008), 360]) ignore the comma after the *intimam suam rationem* and then interpret this phrase as referring to the physical union of husband and wife and not to the *nexus*, the connection between the unitive and procreative significances. This greatly weakens the fundamental message. Furthermore, the current translations suggest that the mere physical intimate union of the spouses *makes* them apt (*idoneos*) to receive life. This is not true. Abortion, divorce and paternal indifference with the abandonment of single mothers prove the opposite.

⁶⁴ The psychological shock of the election of St. John Paul II and his cry, “Do not

In another context, when the emotions of anger or sadness have as their object a parent who has miserably failed in parental responsibilities, the emotional life of the child is deeply wounded. The combining of justified negative emotional reactions with a natural attachment to the parent can be extremely perplexing. The resulting emotional disorders are a breeding ground for all sorts of addictive behaviors. Generally, those who fall into drug addiction do so not because they have a too strong desire for pleasurable experiences offered by the drug, but because they are suffering a deep and perplexing sadness that they do not know how to handle, and so they escape to the addiction.

The Handling of the Emotions

The emotions, being a part of the bodily component of man, are intrinsically good. They are to be appreciated as such, not only rationally, but also in the instinctive assessment of their movement. Humans have the same set of emotional reactions as animals, but these are located within a perception and appreciation of their universal meaning. In moments of hunger, desire, sexual attraction, fear, ambition, or anger the human being can perceive and understand the object of the passionate movement as participating in the universal true good and therefore can move towards that object appropriately, respecting wider concerns, the needs of others, and other issues that may have a greater immediate importance. As the free choice directs the emotions to the good, it approves their basic dynamism because it takes into account their natural finality and the rational consistency and finality of their appropriate objects that are grasped. The reason does not necessarily have to have an in-depth speculative knowledge of moral objects so as to direct the emotions. It is sufficient that, functioning as the practical reason together with the *vis cogitativa*, it perceives the inherent significance of the object to which the emotion is moving. But if a basic error appears in the assessment of that object, then also the emotional reaction to it will be faulty.

Aquinas, with his common sense and optimistic approach, attributed a due place to the passions in his moral synthesis. They are to be neither denied nor elevated to prime rank in action. Within their natural structure, the emotions have a need for cooperation and recognition of the directive guidance of the spiritual powers, but they also have their own dignity. For this reason Aquinas located the virtues of temperance and fortitude within the passions themselves. In this he disagreed with St.

be afraid,” had a liberating effect upon the repressed Catholic societies of the communist world.

Bonaventure, who located these cardinal virtues in the will. The Franciscan imagined that the virtuous individual has to constantly restrain the wild force of the passions by sheer will-power. The Dominican appreciated the positive value and colorfulness that the emotions give to life, and so he did not expel them from virtue. Both when the emotions are directed by reason within the natural acquired virtues and when they are directed by the believing reason that is open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit within the infused moral virtues, they retain their richness and affective charm. This is because they have within themselves an innate openness to this higher guidance.⁶⁵

Even though Aquinas did not work out a phenomenology of psychic disorders because in his major synthesis he presented the graced individual who is an icon of God, he was aware of the fact that the emotions can be handled badly, as when they do not cooperate with the reason and the will or when other emotions try to stamp out an undesired emotion. Precisely for this reason, Aquinas differentiated between chastity and continence. Chastity is a virtue allied with temperance, and therefore it is located within the sexual appetite itself that it domesticates. Continence is not a virtue but an emergency restraining reaction located in the will, without any cooperation of the emotions.⁶⁶ The example of a neurotic mechanism that Aquinas gave was the internal blocking of sadness and anger resulting in their explosion and not integration. This happens when fear of punishment replaces the guiding force of the reason and pretends to be the conscience.⁶⁷ Such basically neurotic reactions do not

⁶⁵ *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 74, a. 3 [ad 1]: “Likewise, in us the sense appetite excels that of all other animals in that it was made to be moved by the reason” (J. Fearon, vol. 25, 1969); *ST Ia-IIae*, q. 68, a. 4: “But to be moved by the command of reason is in accord with the nature of the faculties of appetite, likewise, to be moved by the prompting of God, as by a higher power, is in accord with the nature of all man’s faculties” (E. D. O’Connor, vol. 24, 1974).

⁶⁶ *ST IIa-IIae*, q. 155, a. 4: “Now intelligence burgeons more in the temperate than in the continent, because by temperance the sensory appetite itself is subordinated and as it were wholly possessed by mind, whereas with continence its low desires remain rebellious” (Gilby, vol. 44, 1972).

⁶⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. F. R. Larcher (Lander: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), ch. 5, l. 6 (454): “[I]nternal affections, when they are kept within and permitted no outlet, burn the more strongly within. This is clear in sorrow and anger which, when they are kept within, continually increase; but if they are given any kind of release outwardly, their vigor is dissipated. But a prohibition, since it threatens a penalty, compels man not to give outward expression to his desire, so that, being kept within, it burns more vigorously.”

generate virtue. Instead, they produce the exact opposite, disordered, obsessive, and compulsive reactions that are outside the control of the spiritual faculties. It is within such faulty mechanisms that addictions are born.

The precise individuation of human faculties and of the two sets of emotions that are the concupiscible and the irascible appetites worked out by classical psychology allows for an explanation of neurosis that is clearer and more convincing than the one offered by Sigmund Freud. The Viennese psychiatrist discovered that an emotion can be repressed within the psyche, from which it occasionally erupts in a disordered and compulsive manner. Freud attributed the repressing power to the *super-ego*, which he understood as being a mixture of internal psychic forces and external social and moral pressures. He therefore postulated the liberation from such external moral formation. The results of this cure have turned out to be disastrous. He was correct, however, in noting the phenomenon of repression.

The Dutch psychiatrists Anna A. Terruwe and Conrad W. Baars found that neurosis can be explained better with the help of Thomistic terms.⁶⁸ They defined it as the repression of one emotion conducted by another emotion, most often coming from the parallel appetite. The emotion of fear or the emotions of energy that are within the irascible appetite are to serve the emotions of the concupiscible appetite so that they may attain their appropriate end. When, instead, they stifle them, appearing as a wedge between the concupiscible emotions and reason, neurosis results. In the language of pastoral experience and theology, this mechanism can be described as scrupulosity and Pelagianism. The scrupulous individual panics about past and future, real and imaginary sins, and tries to exclude his nascent feelings through the only force which he trusts, his fear. The Pelagian, on the contrary, has a resolute confidence in the power of his psychic emotional energy composed of the emotions of hope and audacity that he often mistakenly treats as the will, and using that energy, he tries to exclude the undesired emotions of the concupiscible appetite, be they the sexual desire or other fascinations and their opposites. In neurosis, the undesired emotions are not necessarily understood as being evil, but they are felt as being intrinsically inappropriate because the instinctive practical cognition of their objects is faulty, and so as a result, the emotions are repressed, meaning that they are as if buried alive. Since they cannot be permanently excised, they reappear

⁶⁸ *Psychic Wholeness and Healing: Using ALL the Powers of the Human Psyche* (New York: Alba House, 1981).

in a compulsive, un-free manner, leading to actions that are addictive.

The habitual repression of an undesired emotion springs from the erroneous perception of the object of practical cognition by the *vis cogitativa*. Since, this is in part the result of a faulty education and of environmental influences, Freud was correct in claiming that the repressing *superego* contains something more than just internal psychic factors. When, following a distorted surrounding culture, the object of practical cognition is interpreted in a manner that is contrary to its inherent finality, it must fail to elicit a harmonious reaction of its corresponding emotion. That emotion is then experienced as something disturbing, and so another emotion attempts to repress it. Furthermore, if the moral law had always been presented not as a rational guidance to be received rationally, but as a voluntarist force demanding immediate *ad nutum* obedience, this also must result in negative emotional reactions.

Thus, in pondering on emotional disorders that are conducive to addictions, the objects of the major emotional movements and their inherent finalities need to be reflected on so that they will be aptly grasped by the practical reason. These fundamental emotional drives are the sexual drive and emotional assertiveness, since they enable procreation and the resilient undertaking of life's challenges. Only the derailment of these basic drives generates neurosis and its consequent obsessive-compulsive reactions. Other emotions and their objects do not have such a fundamental importance, but they too can also be drawn into distorted addictive behavior. A neurotic approach to sexuality may provoke the addictive consumption of sweets serving as a replacement of the emotional sweetness that is hungered for.

Growth in the moral virtues that govern the emotional sphere can take place only when the emotions are approved of, felt as being fundamentally good, and then guided by the free choice, in which the practical reason, together with the instinctive backing of the *vis cogitativa*, cooperates with the will, moving towards the true, rather than the falsely presented, good. Furthermore, when there is an attachment to God through faith and charity, the emotions can collaborate with the spiritual powers with ease, speed, and joy. They thus supply a bodily charm to the infused moral virtues that are located within them.

Conclusion

Neuroscience offers a helpful input into the study of psychology and human agency. It observes permanent changes in the brain that occur as a result of addictive substance abuse. It can propose pharmacological aids that alleviate anxieties. The pertinent observations of neuroscience can

therefore be integrated into a comprehensive understanding of human nature, composed of body and spirit and open to the transforming power of grace. It cannot, however, be concluded that the results of the empirical sciences furnish the only possible knowledge and the ultimate explanation of both good and distorted moral action, of virtue, sin, and addictions. Such a conclusion would be an unjustified metaphysical claim denying reality to what is not perceptible through empirical cognitive methods. Neurological observations describe only what is happening in the body, and so they cannot judge the spiritual sphere, even as they observe the mutual correspondence of the body and spirit. A speculative description of psychic and moral mechanisms should not therefore be questioned. Nor should openness to grace be questioned. An act of faith and its ensuing act of charity can be conscious, made uniquely for the love of God, and since such acts are psychologically and socially observable, they probably also are accompanied by some neurological changes that are subject to empirical observation. Grace itself cannot be measured by empirical methods, but mental states resulting from belief in God and his grace can.

Spiritual problems have to be resolved in a spiritual way, even when they have psychic and physiological repercussions. The problem of addiction and the corresponding question of growth in virtue are fundamentally spiritual issues. Moral conversion is a process, and time is needed for it. The Christian, even when he is burdened by repeated sin, prays: "May your healing work, O Lord, free us, we pray, from doing evil and lead us to what is right."⁶⁹ The infused virtues are born of grace, and so they are *genitum non factum*, begotten not produced. Their development, being the fruit of the fecundity of grace, has to pass through progressive purifications, some of which are actively undertaken through ascetic effort, and others are passive, meaning that they are forced by God Himself. It is obvious that the passive purifications are more fruitful. Grace fits nature, and so it can elicit within human nature the charm of the children of God responding creatively and generously to the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:14) in the life of the infused virtues. At the same time, however, it has to be remembered that grace is a foreign body within nature, and so its healing influence, like that of a surgeon's knife or of a virus, generates a feverish reaction. Not every rebellious phase is a sign of moral perversion. Sometimes, in the case of the believing Christian, it is a sign that grace is at work. Crises are necessary stages that force a true conversion. It is not uniquely adornment with virtues that grace is

⁶⁹ Prayer after Communion, 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

ultimately building in the soul, but transparency to the movement of the grace of the Holy Spirit. 