

Relating Aquinas's Infused and Acquired Virtues: Some Problematic Texts for a Common Interpretation

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THOMAS AQUINAS famously posits not one, but two sets of moral virtues: the acquired virtues, which order man to his natural good and which can be acquired through one's own repeated virtuous acts, and the infused virtues, which order man to supernatural beatitude and which must be bestowed on man by God. The very fact that Aquinas describes two sets of moral virtues naturally raises the question of how he believes those virtues are related. This latter question is particularly important because of its ties to broader questions about the relationship between grace and nature. To draw too sharp a distinction between the infused and acquired virtues—to argue, for instance, that one set of virtues has nothing at all to do with the other—would be tantamount to a denial of the oft-repeated and thoroughly Thomistic idea that grace perfects nature. Aquinas clearly believes that there is at least a minimal relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, for he argues that the cultivation of the acquired virtues disposes one to receive grace and the infused virtues. A number of scholars, however, argue that the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues goes much deeper than this, and that these virtues are mutually interdependent: on the one hand, the infused virtues perfect and complete the acquired virtues; on the other hand, one cannot successfully carry out acts of infused virtue unless one simultaneously cultivates the acquired virtues. Scholars who make such claims, moreover, typically support them by citing the same few texts of Aquinas. My aim in this essay is not to defend or refute the claims themselves, but rather to examine three texts

typically cited in support of them. I will argue that, far from establishing the sort of mutual interdependence described above, these texts leave the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues utterly opaque. One cannot interpret these texts in the way that these scholars do without assuming some of the very claims these texts purportedly prove.

This essay will have four parts. In the first three parts I will examine three texts commonly cited as evidence of the interdependence of the infused and acquired virtues, and I will argue that these texts fall far short of establishing such claims. In the fourth and final section, I will argue that any theory of the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues must first establish its compatibility with the few explicit remarks that Aquinas does make about the infused and acquired virtues.

The project of this essay is important for two reasons. First, although I focus narrowly on the proper interpretation of three small sections of text, the proper interpretation of them has important ramifications for broader questions about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues. My argument shows that some positions typically taken for granted need a more robust defense. If such a defense cannot be given, then the positions themselves need to be rethought. Second, this essay indicates that Aquinas's account of the infused and acquired virtues is more complex and more difficult to navigate than many scholars propose.¹

I. The Infused Virtues Strengthen the Acquired Virtues:

ST I-II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3

One way of affirming a deep interdependence between the infused and acquired virtues is to maintain that the infused virtues somehow complete or perfect existing acquired virtues.² Scholars who make such

¹ Several recent scholars have also noted the numerous interpretational questions that Aquinas's theory of the infused moral virtues raises. See for instance Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 31–32; Jean Porter, “The Subversion of Virtue,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1992), 19–41; and Mark Jordan, “Philosophy and Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 232–51, esp. 239. While these scholars raise general questions, however, this paper takes a more detailed approach inasmuch as it zeroes in on specific texts of Aquinas.

² One can make such a claim regardless of whether one believes that the Christian's acquired virtues somehow “coexist” with his infused virtues or that his acquired virtues are somehow “united” to his infused virtues. For a discussion of the differences between these two positions, see Angela Knobel, “Two Theories of Christian Virtue,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010): 599–618, and Angela Knobel, “Can the Infused and Acquired Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23 (2010): 381–96. I now believe that the description of the

claims, moreover, typically cite the same text as evidence, namely *ST* I–II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3.³ A recent version of such a claim is made by John Inglis, who cites this text in support of his assertion that

Aquinas claimed that receiving the proper infused moral virtue strengthens the corresponding acquired moral virtue. . . . The infused virtues are like a medicine that strengthens the acquired virtues and allows one to surpass them in living the good life. Without the parallel infused moral virtues that redirect one's actions, such actions would remain imperfect. Therefore, one prepares for the infusion of moral virtue through the acquisition of moral habits that are themselves strengthened by infusion.⁴

Inglis is by no means the only scholar who offers such an account.⁵ Like others who make similar claims, Inglis believes that proof for this interpretation of Aquinas can be found in the fourth article of question 51 of the

“unification” view that I offered in those papers should be nuanced. Some of those who believe that the infused and acquired virtues “form a unity” nonetheless believe that the Christian's infused and acquired virtues remain distinct. These scholars simply hold that the acts of those virtues, though distinct, typically occur simultaneously. Although this point does not substantially affect the thesis of either paper, it is an important one, and deserves mention.

³ Not all scholars cite this text in defense of this claim. Terrence Irwin, who likewise claims that Aquinas believes the infused virtues perfect the acquired virtues, cites *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 69, a. 3. In that text, however, Aquinas is describing not the differences between the infused and acquired virtues but the differences between the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. See Terrence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 647. Still other scholars have made this claim without citing a specific text in defense of it. See for instance Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, trans. Sr. Timothea Doyle, vol. 1 (St. Louis: Herder, 1947), 64. Some other scholars, such as Anthony Falanga and Andrew Dell'Olio, cite Aquinas's numerous statements that charity is the “form” of the virtues in defense of this claim. See Anthony Falanga, *Charity the Form of the Virtues According to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948) and Andrew Dell'Olio, *Foundations of Moral Selfhood* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 129–30. An adequate defense of this latter position would need to show that Aquinas intends this claim to apply equally to infused and acquired virtue, and neither Falanga nor Dell'Olio establishes that this is the case. A full discussion of this point, however, is outside the scope of the present paper.

⁴ John Inglis, “Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 (2002): 19.

⁵ Etienne Gilson, for instance, cites the same text in support of a virtually identical claim. See Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1994), 343. For a history of the debate over the meaning of this text, see Robert Coerver, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues*

prima secundae. Here, in response to the third objection, Aquinas writes: “the acts which are produced by an infused habit do not cause a habit, but confirm a pre-existing habit.”⁶ It is by no means obvious, however, that we should interpret this quote in the way that Inglis and others do.⁷

Even when read in isolation, it is clear that the text cited above admits a different interpretation. While Aquinas definitely does assert that acts of infused virtue strengthen the pre-existing virtue, he nowhere says that the pre-existing virtue that is strengthened is an acquired virtue. In fact, it would be reasonable to think that the pre-existing virtue that is strengthened by acts of infused virtue is the infused virtue that gave rise to the acts in the first place. Absent some further argument, it is not at all clear why one should assume that it is the acquired counterpart that acts of infused virtue strengthen. When this text is read in context, and especially when it is read in conjunction with other passages where Aquinas makes the same remark, such an interpretation becomes even less convincing.

The text cited from article 4 of question 51 is offered in reply to an objection and as such must be read in conjunction with it. The fourth article of question 51 of the *prima secundae* asks whether any dispositions are infused in man by God. The third objection points out that if man did have dispositions infused in him by God, then he would be able to exercise them in action. Repeated actions, however, are themselves causes of dispositions. Thus, one who possessed an infused disposition and who exercised it in action would really have *two* dispositions of the same species: one that was infused in him by God, and one which he caused through repeated acts. Since it is impossible to have two forms of the same species in one subject, the objector concludes, it is not possible to

(Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 46–54. The historical figures Coerver cites differ from Gilson in this important respect: they hold that the infused and acquired virtues are distinct from each other. Gilson appears to believe that the infused and acquired virtues form a unity. This latter question, however, is not directly relevant to the present discussion. Though she does not explicitly argue for his interpretation of this text, Renéé Mirkes appears to take a position similar to that of Gilson when she addresses other interpretations of this text in “Moral Virtue and Facility,” *The Thomist* 61 (April 1997): 189–218.

⁶ Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3: actus qui producuntur ex habitu infuso non causant aliquem habitum, sed confirmant habitum praeexistentem; sicut medicinalia remedia adhibita homini sano per naturam, non causant aliquam sanitatem sed sanitatem prius habitam corroborant (Leon. 6.329).

⁷ Mazella and Suarez are exceptions, for they would criticize an interpretation such as Inglis’s. See Coerver, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues*, 49. Their objections, however, focus heavily on the theoretical problems such an interpretation raises. While I agree with their criticisms, my own criticism will focus on the question of whether this claim is an accurate reading of the text.

have habits that are infused by God.⁸ The objector, then, has a very specific concern, and the concern is this: if one has an infused virtue and acts accordingly, one will create an acquired virtue that—since it produces the same kind of actions as its infused counterpart—is of the same species as the infused virtue. This, however, is problematic, since one would then have two habits—one acquired and one infused—of the same species. The objection, then, takes it for granted that (a) acts of infused virtue will be of the same species as the infused virtues themselves and that (b) when such acts are performed repeatedly, they will generate an acquired virtue, a virtue that—given (a)—will necessarily be of the same species as the infused virtue that produced it, and hence of a different species than any pre-existing acquired virtues.

Some of the claims made in the objection above are claims that Aquinas has no reason to object to. Aquinas, like his objector, would agree that one cannot possess two different “forms” of the same species of virtue. In fact, Aquinas emphasizes that the infused and acquired virtues belong to different species, and on this basis he argues that the infused and acquired virtues can exist simultaneously in the same individual.⁹ Perhaps more importantly, Aquinas would agree that the infused virtues produce a different species of act than the acquired virtues do. Indeed, it is the very necessity of a different species of act that leads Aquinas to posit the infused virtues in the first place.¹⁰ All of this is important, because it helps to clarify the specific problem that Aquinas needs to respond to. Aquinas needs to explain why repeated acts of infused virtue don't create an acquired virtue that belongs to same species as the infused virtue whose acts produced it.

As we saw above, Aquinas responds to the objection that repeated acts of infused virtue would create an acquired virtue by arguing that repeated

⁸ Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 51, a. 4, obj. 3: Praeterea, si aliquis habitus a Deo infunditur, per illum habitum homo potest multos actus producere. Sed ex illis actibus causatur similis habitus, ut in II *Ethic.* dicitur. Sequitur ergo duos habitus eiusdem speciei esse in eodem, unum acquisitum, et alterum infusum. Quod videtur esse impossibile, non enim duae formae unius speciei possunt esse in eodem subiecto. Non ergo habitus aliquis infunditur homini a Deo (Leon. 6.329).

⁹ Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis* (hereafter *In Sent.*) III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 4, s.c. 2: Praeterea, duae formae ejusdem speciei non possunt esse in uno subiecto. Sed virtus infusa est simul cum virtute acquisita, ut patet in adulto qui habens virtutem acquisitam ad Baptismum accedit, qui non minus recipit de infusis quam puer. Ergo virtus acquisita et infusa differunt specie (Moos. 1027).

¹⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 63, a. 3, ad 1: Ad primum ergo dicendum quod aliquae quidem virtutes morales et intellectuales possunt causari in nobis ex nostris actibus, tamen illae non sunt proportionatae virtutibus theologicis. Et ideo oportet alias, eis proportionatas, immediate a Deo causari (Leon. 6.409). See also Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 10.

acts of infused virtue don't cause a virtue, but "confirm the pre-existing habit." Especially because of Aquinas's repeated insistence that the infused and acquired virtues belong to different species, it is natural to assume that the "pre-existing habit" that acts of infused virtue confirm is the infused habit that produced it. To claim that the "pre-existing habit" that acts of infused virtue confirm is an acquired virtue is confusing for two reasons. First, this would mean that acts of one species of virtue "confirm" an altogether different species of virtue, and such a claim seems strange. If there is any virtue that acts of infused virtue "confirm," it seems it should be the very virtue that produced the act, not a different species of virtue altogether. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Aquinas says that acts of infused virtue "confirm the pre-existing habit." We have absolutely no reason to assume, however, that an acquired virtue "pre-exists" in all those who possess the infused virtues. To the contrary, it is clear that many of those who receive the infused virtues, such as sinners and baptized infants, have no acquired virtues at all. In those cases where no acquired virtue pre-exists to be confirmed, it simply cannot be the case that the "pre-existing" virtue that is "confirmed" by acts of infused virtue is an acquired one. The most reasonable way to interpret Aquinas's response, then, is as follows: acts of infused virtue don't cause one to acquire a virtue of the same species as infused virtue; acts of infused virtue confirm the infused virtue that already exists.

Aquinas's response to the same question in his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis* supports the interpretation offered above. In this text, after offering the same responses given in the *prima secundae*, Aquinas draws a comparison between acts of infused virtue and acts of acquired virtue. Even acts of an acquired virtue don't create a new virtue, but strengthen an existing virtue. If it were otherwise, he explains, habits would be multiplied indefinitely.¹¹ Aquinas, then, seems to be making a general point about how virtues increase. Once one possesses a virtue, one can no longer say that acts of that virtue create a new virtue, or one would possess countless virtues. Rather, one must say that acts of that virtue strengthen the virtue that already exists. Again, though—and this is especially clear from the parallel that Aquinas draws between the infused and acquired virtues—it is unreasonable to read this as an assertion that acts of infused virtue strengthen a pre-existing acquired virtue. To the

¹¹ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 10, ad 19: Ad decimumnonum dicendum, quod actus virtutis infusae non causant aliquem habitum, sed per eos augetur habitus praeexistens: quia nec ex actibus virtutis acquisitae aliquis habitus generatur; alias multiplicarentur habitus in infinitum (Marietti).

contrary, Aquinas appears to be saying that acts of infused virtue strengthen pre-existing infused virtues, *just as* acts of acquired virtue strengthen pre-existing acquired virtues.

One might object to the argument offered above in the following way. Aquinas clearly maintains that while man can increase the acquired virtues through repeated acts, only God can increase the infused virtues. Given this, one might argue that if repeated acts of infused virtue strengthen any virtue, they must strengthen an acquired virtue. For, such an objector might argue, if we concede that repeated acts of infused virtue “strengthen” an infused virtue, then it looks like we have managed to increase an infused virtue through our own power, and Aquinas has already denied that this is possible. Aquinas’s own remarks about the increase of infused virtue, however, indicate a response to such an objection.

In different texts, Aquinas indicates both that it is God who increases the infused virtues and that man’s actions are nonetheless conducive to the increase of infused virtue. In his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, Aquinas argues that the infused and acquired virtues are increased in different ways. The acquired virtues are increased by man’s actions, while the infused virtues are increased by God. Nevertheless, Aquinas argues that man’s actions can dispose him to receive the infused virtues, either insofar as he cultivates acquired virtues, which dispose him to receive the initial gift of infused virtue, or insofar as he performs acts of infused virtue that dispose him to receive an increase in those virtues.¹² Aquinas makes roughly the same point in the sixth article of question 24 of the *secunda secundae*. In the context of explaining whether or not every act of charity results in an increase of charity, Aquinas explains that each act of charity “disposes toward the increase of charity, inasmuch as one act of charity makes man more ready to perform another act of charity.”¹³ After several such acts, man “breaks forth in a

¹² Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 11: Unde sicut virtutes acquisitae augentur ex actibus per quos causantur, ita virtutes infusae augentur per actionem Dei, a quo causantur. Actus autem nostri comparantur ad augmentum caritatis et virtutum infusarum, ut disponentes, sicut ad caritatem a principio obtinendam; homo enim faciens quod in se est, praeparat se, ut a Deo recipiat caritatem. Ulterius autem actus nostri possunt esse meritorii respectu augmenti caritatis; quia praesupponunt caritatem, quae est principium merendi. Sed nullus potest mereri, quin a principio obtineat caritatem; quia meritum sine caritate esse non potest. Sic igitur caritatem augeri per intensionem dicimus (Marietti).

¹³ Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 24, a. 6: Ita etiam non quolibet actu caritatis caritas actu augeatur, sed quilibet actus caritatis disponit ad caritatis augmentum, in quantum ex uno actu caritatis homo redditur promptior iterum ad agendum secundum

more fervent act of love . . . and then charity is increased in act.”¹⁴ Aquinas’s explanation of charity’s increase is perfectly consistent with his claim that acts of infused virtue “do not create a virtue, but through them an existing virtue is increased.” Man’s repeated charitable acts make him more prompt to perform similar acts until he “breaks forth in a more fervent act of love,” and his charity is increased. It is God, of course, who is ultimately responsible for both the initial infusion of charity and any further increase in it. But as the above text indicates, the repeated acts of one who possesses charity prepare him for that increase.

The most natural reading of *ST* I–II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3, then, does nothing to support the claim that repeated acts of infused virtue strengthen an existing acquired virtue. To the contrary, the most natural reading of this text implies that repeated acts of infused virtues result in an increase of infused virtue, just as repeated acts of acquired virtue result in an increase of acquired virtue. In the former case, such acts merely prepare man for the increase, since it is God who increases infused virtues. In the latter case, it is man himself who is responsible for the increase of virtue. In both cases, however, growth in virtue parallels man’s repeated virtuous acts.

II. The Acquired Virtues “Facilitate” Acts of Infused Virtue: *ST* I–II, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2

In the previous section, I addressed the claim that acts of infused virtue “strengthen” existing acquired virtues. Many scholars go beyond this claim, though, and argue that the infused virtues are themselves dependent on the acquired virtues. Several scholars argue that those who possess the infused virtues must also simultaneously cultivate the acquired virtues, and that it is only by the simultaneous cultivation of the acquired virtues that one can successfully perform acts of infused virtue. Without the assistance of the acquired virtues, they argue, infused virtues are only virtues in an analogous sense. Andrew Dell’Olio, for instance, argues that “infused virtues, without the facility or ability that comes with acquired virtues, are habits only in an analogous sense. For they lack the ease or facility of operation that characterize a habit in the strict sense.”¹⁵ Inglis gives an account

caritatem (Leon. 8.180–181); it is important not to assume that this sort of increase—in which repeated acts dispose to an increase over time, until a sudden increase occurs—is unique to the infused virtues. Aquinas gives a similar account of how any habit increases in *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 3.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *ST* II–II, q. 24, a. 6: et, habilitate crescente, homo prorumpit in actum ferventiorum dilectionis, quo conetur ad caritatis profectum; et tunc caritas augeatur in actu (Leon. 8.180–181).

¹⁵ Dell’Olio, *Foundations of Moral Selfhood*, 136. Although it is not directly relevant to the present discussion, it is worth noting that Dell’Olio’s claim that the infused

roughly identical to that offered by Dell'Olio, claiming that "Aquinas argued that it is easier for one with acquired virtue to live the life of infused virtue than it is for one with infused moral virtue alone. Acquired virtue can remove habits contrary to infused virtue, habits that make acts difficult and unpleasant."¹⁶ Again, this account is hardly unique to Inglis and Dell'Olio. Several other scholars make similar claims.¹⁷

When scholars cite text in defense of the claim that the infused virtues rely on acquired virtues for their successful action, they typically cite *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2. Both Inglis and Dell'Olio cite this text in defense of the statements quoted above, and other scholars cite it as well.¹⁸ As with *ST I-II*, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3, however, it is not at all clear that the text supports such an interpretation. The third article of question 65 asks whether charity can exist apart from the moral virtues. The second objection argues that charity can exist without the moral virtues. As evidence for this claim, the objector offers examples of those who possess charity but find it difficult to perform acts of moral virtue. Since those who possess the virtues should find the exercise of virtue easy and pleasant, the fact that these individuals find it difficult to perform acts of moral virtue seems to indicate that they

virtues are virtues "only in an analogous sense" is confusing. For Aquinas, it is the infused virtues and not their acquired counterparts that are the paradigm of virtue. If one wishes to claim that the infused virtues are virtues only in an analogous sense, then one is committed to the claim that the paradigm of virtue is only analogously a virtue. While one might conceivably make such a claim, Dell'Olio seems to mean that the acquired virtues are the paradigm. The claim, at the very least, needs clarification. Many other scholars, including John Harvey, likewise describe the infused virtues as virtues "only in an analogous sense." Such claims, again, need clarifying. See John Harvey, "The Nature of the Infused Moral Virtues," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 8 (1955): 172–221; Coerver credits Mazella with the same view. See Coerver, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues*, 17. For a nice explanation of the contrary view, see Jordan, "Philosophy and Theology," 236–41.

¹⁶ Inglis, "Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues," 21.

¹⁷ See for instance Mirkes, "Moral Virtue and Facility," 191; Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, V.1, 63; Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 87. Terrence Irwin, interestingly enough, reads this text in precisely the opposite way, citing it as evidence that the acquired virtues can make it *more difficult* to practice the infused virtues. See Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, 647. Irwin's diametrically opposite reading supports my claims about the ambiguity of this text.

¹⁸ Inglis, "Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues," 21; Dell'Olio, *Foundations of Moral Selfhood*, 136; See also Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 87, and Mirkes, "Moral Virtue and Facility," 191. Not everyone who makes such claims cites text to support them. Garrigou-Lagrange, for instance, simply asserts that this interdependence exists.

do not possess the moral virtues.¹⁹ Aquinas replies by explaining why some who possess habits still find it difficult to exercise them. This occurs, says Aquinas, when some obstacle is present. Those who possess the habit of science, for instance, have trouble exercising it when they are sleepy or unwell. Similarly, some of those who possess the infused virtues also possess vicious dispositions as a result of previous actions.²⁰ Having offered this explanation, Aquinas then denies that contrary dispositions play a similar role in acts of acquired virtue: "This difficulty does not arise for the acquired moral virtues, because the repeated acts by which they are acquired also remove the contrary dispositions."²¹

The assertion that the infused virtues rely on the acquired virtues for their successful action goes considerably beyond anything Aquinas explic-

¹⁹ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 3, obj. 2: Praeterea, qui habet habitum virtutis, de facili operatur ea quae sunt virtutis, et ei secundum se placent, unde et signum habitus est delectatio quae fit in opere, ut dicitur in II Ethic. Sed multi habent caritatem, absque peccato mortali existentes, qui tamen difficultatem in operibus virtutum patiuntur, neque eis secundum se placent, sed solum secundum quod referuntur ad caritatem. Ergo multi habent caritatem, qui non habent alias virtutes (Leon. 6.424).

²⁰ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2: Ad secundum dicendum quod quandoque contingit quod aliquis habens habitum, patitur difficultatem in operando, et per consequens non sentit delectationem et complacentiam in actu, propter aliquod impedimentum extrinsecus superveniens, sicut ille qui habet habitum scientiae, patitur difficultatem in intelligendo, propter somnolentiam vel aliquam infirmitatem. Et similiter habitus moralium virtutum infusarum patiuntur interdum difficultatem in operando, propter aliquas dispositiones contrarias ex praecedentibus actibus relictas. Quae quidem difficultas non ita accidit in virtutibus moralibus acquisitis, quia per exercitium actuum, quo acquiruntur, tolluntur etiam contrariae dispositiones (Leon. 6.425). In this text, Aquinas does not limit the acts that can cause the "previous dispositions" that provide obstacles to acts of infused virtues to sinful ones. In his treatment of the same question in his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus cardinalibus*, however, he offers a slightly different answer, saying that a repentant sinner, as a result of his previous sinful acts, retains dispositions that oppose acts of charity and the infused virtues. Some scholars seem to interpret Aquinas's remark here as an indication that dispositions that are contrary to the infused virtues can arise only from previous sinful acts and not, say, from the pagan's acts of acquired virtue. See for instance Michael Sherwin, "Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 44. Aquinas's explicit focus on the dispositions possessed by the repentant sinner in this article, however, indicates that he may not intend to assert that contrary dispositions can be caused only by acquired vices. Aquinas's repeated assertions that the acquired and infused virtues may give rise to different acts also make such an interpretation seem doubtful.

²¹ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2: Quae quidem difficultas non ita accidit in virtutibus moralibus acquisitis, quia per exercitium actuum, quo acquiruntur, tolluntur etiam contrariae dispositiones.

itly says in question 65, article 3, ad 2. His aim in responding to the second objection is to explain how it is that one can possess the infused virtues and yet still experience difficulty in performing acts of infused virtue. In order to explain how this difficulty arises, he contrasts the infused virtues with their acquired counterparts. Those who possess acquired virtues don't experience difficulty when they perform acts of acquired virtue, because the very process of acquisition drives out contrary inclinations. The infused virtues, on the other hand, are bestowed all at once. Although the infused virtues do destroy vices *qua* vices, they do not drive out pre-existing dispositions. The infused virtues, Aquinas tells us in other texts, do not drive out contrary inclinations; they merely cause it to be the case that one is not ruled by those inclinations.²² One can, then, simultaneously possess an infused virtue *and* contrary dispositions. In one who possesses the infused virtues, such contrary inclinations make acts of infused virtue difficult in the same way that hunger or fatigue makes it difficult for one who possesses the habit of science to arrive at conclusions. A considerable leap is required, however, to move from Aquinas's claim that the infused and acquired virtues confer different kinds of facility to the claim that the infused virtues somehow *depend* on or are *completed by* the acquired virtues.

One might argue, of course, that Aquinas's description of the different facilities conferred by the infused and acquired virtues invites certain conclusions about their interdependence. While I think one could certainly argue that this text supports the "minimal" account of the interdependence between the infused and acquired virtues described earlier (that is, the cultivation of acquired virtue disposes one to receive grace and the infused virtues), I will argue in what follows that one cannot make any more substantive claims without making assumptions that are not substantiated by the text.

Those who claim that the infused virtues depend upon the cultivation of the acquired virtues for their successful action must both (a) make an assumption about whether those who possess the infused virtues must continue to cultivate the acquired virtues, and (b) make an assumption about the similarities between the kinds of acts that the infused and

²² *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 10, ad 14: Sed quantum ad aliquid praevallet in hoc virtus acquisita, et quantum ad aliquid virtus infusa. Virtus enim acquisita praevallet quantum ad hoc quod talis impugnatio minus sentitur. Et hoc habet ex causa sua: quia per frequentes actus quibus homo est assuefactus ad virtutem, homo iam dissuevit talibus passionibus obedire, cum consuevit eis resistere; ex quo sequitur quod minus earum molestias sentiat. Sed praevallet virtus infusa quantum ad hoc quod facit quod huiusmodi passiones etsi sentiantur, nullo tamen modo dominantur. Virtus enim infusa facit quod nullo modo obediatur concupiscentiis peccati; et facit hoc infallibiliter ipsa manente (Marietti).

acquired virtues give rise to. Certainly, if the cultivation of the acquired virtues continues to be important, and if the acts required by infused virtue are identical to those that the acquired virtues would require, then I should be able to make myself find acts of infused virtue easy and pleasant simply by cultivating the corresponding acquired virtues. This would likewise be the case if, as has been suggested, the infused virtues are acquired virtues that have received the further end of supernatural beatitude.²³ If the act itself remains unaffected and is merely subordinated to a further end, then such an account makes sense. Suppose, however, that the infused and acquired virtues are different not only at the level of ultimate ends but also at the level of proximate ends: not very different, but different nonetheless, so that if infused virtue would require that I perform act x , acquired virtue would require that I perform the only slightly different (but different nonetheless) act x_1 . In this latter case, I still do not have a developed capacity that allows me to perform act x with pleasure and ease. What I have is a developed capacity to perform an act that is very similar to x with pleasure and ease. As a result of possessing such a capacity, I may find the doing of x less repugnant than other acts which are further from x_1 , but I still have not cultivated a habitual disposition that allows me to do x with pleasure and ease. More importantly, if the acquired virtues do indeed give rise to different acts than their infused counterparts do, then it is not at all clear why one who possessed the infused virtues would want to cultivate a disposition to perform acts of acquired virtue. Why, instead of cultivating a disposition to perform x_1 , wouldn't I just perform x , secure in the knowledge that by doing so repeatedly I would dispose myself to receive an increase in infused virtue?

Given the above line of reasoning, the acquired virtues will provide the facility that the infused virtues initially lack only if those in a state of grace must continue to cultivate the acquired virtues, and even then, only if the acts of infused and acquired virtue somehow coincide. One might certainly attempt to argue that this is the case, but anyone wishing to do so would have to grapple with the numerous texts where Aquinas appears to deny this. The moral virtues lie in a mean between excess and defect, and Aquinas consistently argues that the mean of acquired virtue is different from the

²³ See for instance Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 341–42; Mirkes, “Moral Virtue and Facility,” 218; and Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, 647. John Inglis’s view is more complicated, but he likewise seems to find the notion that the acquired virtues can simply be “directed” to supernatural beatitude unproblematic. See Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 19. To answer this question decisively, one needs to consider Aquinas’s claim that man’s end is “two-fold.”

mean of infused virtue.²⁴ When he makes such claims, moreover, he consistently argues not only that the infused and acquired virtues sometimes require different actions but that the proximate end is itself different in each case.²⁵ When I perform an act of acquired temperance, I seek to preserve the health of the body. When I perform an act of infused temperance, I seek to castigate the body and bring it into subjection, albeit in a way that does not harm my bodily health. Even when the acts are identical to an outside observer, they are still importantly different. Everything about Aquinas's explanation, then, makes it seem as if the acquired virtues create a disposition to perform an act that is similar to, but nonetheless importantly different from, the acts that infused temperance requires. If this is so, then it is not at all clear why the cultivation of these similar but importantly different habits is needed to "facilitate" the activity of infused temperance.

One might well use *ST I-II*, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2 to support the more minimal position described earlier: that one who has previously cultivated the acquired virtues will, when he receives grace and the infused virtues, find acts of infused virtue less difficult. Aquinas clearly asserts in other texts that the cultivation of the acquired virtues disposes one to receive the infused virtues in the first place.²⁶ One thing such a claim might mean is that one who has cultivated acquired virtues has removed many of the obstacles that stand between him and the infused virtues. The gluttonous convert probably *will* face more obstacles in his attempt to perform acts of infused

²⁴ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 4: Manifestum est autem quod alterius rationis est modus qui imponitur in huiusmodi concupiscentiis secundum regulam rationis humanae, et secundum regulam divinam. Puta in sumptione ciborum, ratione humana modus statuitur ut non noceat valetudini corporis, nec impediat rationis actum, secundum autem regulam legis divinae, requiritur quod homo castiget corpus suum, et in servitutem redigat, per abstinenciam cibi et potus, et aliorum huiusmodi. Unde manifestum est quod temperantia infusa et acquisita differunt specie, et eadem ratio est de aliis virtutibus (Leon. 6.410–411). See also Aquinas, *In Sent.* III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 4, ad 2 and Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a.10, ad 8.

²⁵ See Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 4, obj. 1 and ad 1; *In Sent.* III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 4, obj. 2; *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 10, obj. 9. It is also noteworthy that Aquinas often uses "object" and "proximate end" interchangeably in these texts. The objector in *ST I-II*, q. 63, a. 4, obj. 1, for instance, uses "proximate end," and Aquinas responds by speaking of the "object."

²⁶ Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a. 11: Unde sicut virtutes acquisitae augentur ex actibus per quos causantur, ita virtutes infusae augentur per actionem Dei, a quo causantur. Actus autem nostri comparantur ad augmentum caritatis et virtutum infusarum, ut disponentes, sicut ad caritatem a principio obtinendam; homo enim faciens quod in se est, praeparat se, ut a Deo recipiat caritatem (Marietti).

temperance than will a convert who previously cultivated acquired temperance. This does not mean, however, that the latter individual will not face obstacles, or that he will find acts of infused temperance easy. It does not even necessarily mean, importantly, that one's previously acquired temperance will not present an obstacle in its own right: it might merely mean that acquired temperance is less of an obstacle than the acquired vices are.²⁷ It is important to distinguish between the claim that the cultivation of the acquired virtues *prepares* one to receive the infused virtues, and the claim that the acquired virtues somehow *complete* the infused virtues. The former assertion merely holds that the cultivation of acquired virtues somehow makes the pagan more receptive to the gift of grace.²⁸ One can agree to such an assertion without conceding anything about the role that the acquired virtues play after the infusion of grace. The latter assertion, however, claims a continued role for the cultivation of the acquired virtues even after the infusion of grace, and it claims that the infused virtues depend on such cultivation for any ease or facility of action.

III. Acquired Prudence “Completes” Infused Prudence:

ST II–II, q. 47, a. 14, ad 1

A third text commonly cited as evidence of the interdependence between the infused and acquired virtues is found in the fourteenth article of question 47 of the *secunda secundae*. Several scholars cite this text as evidence that infused prudence relies on acquired prudence for its perfection. In reality, as I will show in this section, such claims involve considerable over-interpretation of the text. In order to see this more clearly, however, it is necessary to begin by examining a word that appears in this text, namely “*industria*.” I will argue that scholars mistake the meaning of this term and in doing so mistake the very narrow argument of *ST II–II, q. 47, a. 14, ad 1* for a much broader one.

Industria appears in several different places in Aquinas's corpus, and in each of those places it has to do with diligent or purposeful action. It is *industria*, for example, that Aquinas uses to express the difference between sinful acts that occur unintentionally or as a result of passion and those that are done deliberately.²⁹ When an individual sins through *industria*, he

²⁷ The disposition to eat the amount most conducive to the body's health might be less of an obstacle to the body's “castigation and subjection” than gluttony, but there is nothing to say that it will not be an obstacle in its own right.

²⁸ For an interesting hypothesis about how this occurs, see Brian Shanley, “Pagan Virtue,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 553–77.

²⁹ See for instance Aquinas, *ST I–II, q. 24, a. 3, obj. 3*; *ST I–II, q. 47, a. 2*; and *ST I–II, q. 78, a. 1*, among others.

puts deliberate thought into the commission of his sin.³⁰ Such sins are, of course, worse than sins of passion. *Industria* is likewise used to capture the idea that one can alter one's natural inclinations. In his account of modesty, for example, Aquinas argues that even if some are not naturally inclined to modesty, they can remedy the defects of nature through the *industria rationis*.³¹

Although the word *industria* does not appear frequently in Aquinas's discussions of virtue, it is clear that *industria* has at least something to do with virtue. One cannot develop virtues or perform virtuous actions unless one consciously sets out to perform virtuous acts. It is through such deliberate actions that one is able, for instance, to overcome the natural inclinations that dispose toward vicious actions, and hence it is unsurprising that Aquinas says that those who are not naturally inclined toward modesty can become so through the *industria rationis*. Such deliberate action will likewise play an important part, as we shall see, in prudence. At the same time, it is important to notice that even if *industria* may turn out to be a necessary condition of virtue, *industria* is not a virtue. It merely describes a feature of action, namely the purposefulness or the deliberateness or the conscious effort involved in that action. Such *industria*, moreover, can be a feature of good actions and bad actions alike. With this background in place, we can now turn to *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 14, ad 1.

Many scholars maintain that for Aquinas infused prudence is incomplete unless it is complemented by acquired prudence. Infused prudence, these scholars argue, gives man prudence only "in those things necessary for salvation." Because of this, even those who possess the infused virtue of prudence need to cultivate acquired prudence, so that they will possess prudence not only in those things necessary for salvation, but in all aspects of life. Josef Pieper, arguing for this point, writes: "It is true that every Christian receives in baptism, along with the new life of friendship with God, a new supernatural 'infused' prudence. But, says Thomas, this prudence granted to every Christian is limited solely to what is necessary

³⁰ Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 78, a. 4 s.c.: Sed contra est quod peccatum quod ex industria committitur, ex hoc ipso graviorem poenam meretur, secundum illud Iob XXXIV, quasi impios percussit eos in loco videntium, qui quasi de industria recesserunt ab eo. Sed poena non augetur nisi propter gravitatem culpae. Ergo peccatum ex hoc aggravatur, quod est ex industria, seu certa militia (Leon.7.75).

³¹ Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 168, a. 1, ad 2: Ad secundum dicendum quod, quamvis ex naturali dispositione habeat homo aptitudinem ad hanc vel illam dispositionem exteriorum motuum, tamen quod deest naturae, potest suppleri ex industria rationis. Unde Ambrosius dicit, in I de Offic. motum natura informat, si quid sane in natura vitii est, industria emendet (Leon. 10.350).

for his eternal salvation; there is, however, a different, 'fuller' prudence, not immediately granted in baptism, which enables a man to make provision for himself and others . . . this is that prudence in which supernatural grace has united with the prerequisite of naturally perfected ability."³² The "fullest" form of prudence, Pieper concludes, occurs when infused and acquired prudence "are combined . . . in a graced unity."³³ A virtually identical account is offered by Dell'Olio, who argues that "the principles of natural prudence and supernatural prudence form a fuller, unified wisdom."³⁴ Like Pieper, Dell'Olio believes that the supernatural prudence infused in baptism "extends only to what is necessary for salvation."³⁵ There is, however, another "fuller" prudence, which is present only "in those Christians who also have acquired prudence through their own natural capacities."³⁶ Thus, Dell'Olio argues, success in the moral life requires that the Christian cultivate both acquired and infused virtue. Other scholars offer similar accounts.³⁷

If Aquinas does indeed hold that there is a "fuller" prudence that consists of both the infused prudence that "extends to those things necessary for salvation" and the acquired prudence that extends to everything else, then his position is a confusing one, for it implies that some activities in life require infused prudence while others require acquired prudence. It is not at all clear, moreover, how the "fuller" prudence described above is really a "union" of both virtues. Before worrying about the details of such a claim, however, it is important to examine whether or not such a position can really be attributed to Aquinas.

All of those who argue that those who possess infused prudence also need to cultivate acquired prudence in order to possess prudence "fully" cite the same text in defense of their claims, namely the fourteenth article of question 47 of the *secunda secundae*. After addressing in the thirteenth article the question of whether sinners can possess prudence, Aquinas turns in the fourteenth article to the question of "*utrum prudentia sit in omnibus habentibus gratiam*." The first objection argues that prudence cannot be in all who have grace. In order to have prudence, the objector argues, one must have "*industria*," because it is through this that individ-

³² Pieper, *Prudence* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), 14.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Dell'Olio, *Foundations of Moral Selfhood*, 136.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See for instance Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 87–88 and Bonnie Kent, "Habits and Virtues," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 124–25.

uals “sciant bene providere quae agenda sunt.” Since many of those who have grace lack *industria*, the objector argues, not all those who have grace also have prudence.³⁸

I will turn to Aquinas's reply in a moment, but before doing so it is important to note two things that are relevant to the present discussion. The first noteworthy point is that Aquinas has already raised and responded to a similar objection in the *prima secundae*. There, in the course of examining whether one can have moral virtue without intellectual virtue, Aquinas is faced with the objection that not all of those who have moral virtues have intellectual virtues. The intellectual virtues, the objector argues, require that man use his reason perfectly. But many of those who do not use their reason well are “virtuous, and acceptable to God.” Thus, the objector argues, one can have the moral virtues without the intellectual virtues.³⁹ Aquinas responds that those who have the moral virtues need not be able to reason well in every respect, but only regarding those things where virtuous action is required. And this kind of good reasoning, he argues, is in all who have virtue. In this way, says Aquinas, even some of those who seem simple are prudent.⁴⁰ Even in the *prima secundae*, then, Aquinas distinguishes between the kinds of abilities needed for prudence and the kinds of abilities needed for other things.

The second noteworthy point has to do with what it is that the objector claims some of those who possess grace lack. In the *prima secundae* text, the objector argued that some of the people who have the moral virtues aren't smart enough to have intellectual virtues. In the *secunda secundae* text, the objection is similar but slightly different: some of those who possess grace don't possess the *industria* that prudence requires. The objection, then, does not focus on prudence itself, but on a claim about

³⁸ Aquinas, *ST* II–II, q. 47, a. 14, obj. 1: Videtur quod prudentia non sit in omnibus habentibus gratiam. Ad prudentiam enim requiritur industria quaedam, per quam sciant bene providere quae agenda sunt. Sed multi habentes gratiam carent tali industria. Ergo non omnes habentes gratiam habent prudentiam (Leon. 8.362).

³⁹ Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 58, a. 4, obj. 2: Praeterea, per virtutem intellectualem homo consequitur rationis usum perfectum. Sed quandoque contingit quod aliqui in quibus non multum viget usus rationis, sunt virtuosi et Deo accepti. Ergo videtur quod virtus moralis possit esse sine virtute intellectuali (Leon. 6.375).

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I–II, q. 58, a. 4, ad 2: Ad secundum dicendum quod in virtuoso non oportet quod vigeat usus rationis quantum ad omnia, sed solum quantum ad ea quae sunt agenda secundum virtutem. Et sic usus rationis viget in omnibus virtuosus. Unde etiam qui videntur simplices, eo quod carent mundana astutia, possunt esse prudentes; secundum illud Matth. X, estote prudentes sicut serpentes, et simplices sicut columbae (Leon. 8.375).

a necessary condition of prudence, namely *industria*.⁴¹ As we saw above, however, this merely amounts to the claim that individuals cannot possess prudence unless they are diligent about finding out what needs to be done. The objector is merely making a point about something that one must possess in order to be prudent. One cannot have prudence unless one is motivated: one cannot have prudence unless one is diligent about finding out what should and should not be done. Not all of those who are in a state of grace, the objector argues, are so motivated.

Aquinas replies to the objection that not all those in a state of grace possess *industria* by distinguishing two different kinds of *industria*. One kind of *industria*, says Aquinas, is “sufficient” for those things that are necessary for salvation. Since grace “teaches all things,” this kind of *industria* is given to all those who possess grace. There is another, fuller *industria*, however, “through which one is able to provide for himself and others, not only concerning those things necessary for salvation, but even concerning all matters pertaining to human life, and such *industria* is not in all who have grace.”⁴²

It is important to be clear about what Aquinas’s response does and does not say. The objector raises a concern about the *industria* that is a necessary condition for infused prudence. Aquinas responds that those who are in a state of grace are at least motivated to learn what they should do in order to pursue eternal salvation.⁴³ They might not be similarly diligent in other areas of their lives; the latter is a “fuller” sort of *industria*, and is not possessed by all those who are in a state of grace. It is certainly true that *industria* in things necessary for salvation is a prerequisite of infused

⁴¹ Aquinas also uses this word in *ST* II–II, q. 47, a. 13, ad 3 in the context of explaining how it is that the sinner can deliberate well and yet not possess prudence. Aquinas responds that the wicked cannot deliberate well about the ultimate end, but that they can have a certain *naturalis industria* which can be used for either good or bad. Aquinas compares such a one to Aristotle’s *deinotica*. Aquinas’s use of *industria* in other contexts suggests that even here translations such as the one offered by Gilby—“native shrewdness”—are overstated. When Aquinas describes the shrewdness or cleverness that is a part of prudence, he uses a different word, namely *solertia*. See Aquinas, *ST* II–II, q. 49, a. 4, tit: *Utrum solertia sit pars prudentiae*.

⁴² Aquinas, *ST* II–II, q. 47, a. 14, ad 1: *Est autem alia industria plenior, per quam aliquis sibi et aliis potest providere, non solum de his quae sunt necessari ad salutem, sed etiam de quibuscumque pertinentibus ad humanam vitam; et talis industria non est in omnibus habentibus gratiam* (Leon. 8.362).

⁴³ Baptized infants and those who are in a state of grace but similarly unable to use their reason clearly require a special explanation. One natural explanation would be offer the same explanation for their *industria* that Aquinas offers for the other infused virtues, namely the distinction between *habitus* and *usus*. This point is explained in what immediately follows.

prudence, so that one cannot possess infused prudence unless one makes an effort to learn what actions are necessary for salvation. Nothing Aquinas has said, however, implies that this “fuller” *industria* has anything to do with the union of infused and acquired prudence. Aquinas has not said anything about the interdependence of infused and acquired prudence; indeed, he has not said anything about prudence at all. He has only argued that the kind of *industria* that is a necessary condition of infused prudence is present in those who possess grace. Can we conclude that one who possesses “fuller” *industria* possesses *both* infused and acquired virtue? Absent some account of what such “fuller” *industria* amounts to, or of how the infusion of grace affects existing acquired virtues, or some account of whether and how the infused and acquired virtues interact, or whether one who possesses infused virtue is even capable of cultivating separate acquired virtues, it does not seem that we can.

The text commonly cited as evidence of the interdependence between the infused and acquired virtues, then, falls far short of establishing such a connection. Nor do the surrounding articles indicate that such connection exists. Aquinas mentions acquired prudence once in article 14, and he does so only in order to contrast acquired prudence with the main form of prudence under discussion, namely infused prudence. The third objection argues that because the young have grace but not prudence, prudence is not in all who have grace.⁴⁴ Aquinas replies by distinguishing infused and acquired prudence. Acquired prudence, says Aquinas, comes from practice, so that the young possess it neither in habit nor in act. Infused prudence, though, comes from God, and hence baptized infants have prudence and the other virtues, even if they do not yet perform the activities of those virtues. Aquinas then explains how infused prudence becomes perfect. When one performs acts of infused virtue repeatedly, one merits their increase, and hence infused prudence becomes perfect, “even as the other virtues do.”⁴⁵

What Aquinas does not say in his response to the third objection is as interesting as what he does say. If it were really the case that those with

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 14, obj. 3: Praeterea, philosophus dicit, in III Topic., quod iuvenes non constat esse prudentes. Sed multi iuvenes habent gratiam. Ergo prudentia non invenitur in omnibus gratiam habentibus (Leon. 8.362).

⁴⁵ Aquinas, *ST II-II*, q. 47, a. 14, ad 3: Ad tertium dicendum quod prudentia acquisita causatur ex exercitio actuum, unde indiget ad sui generationem experimento et tempore, ut dicitur in II Ethic. Unde non potest esse in iuvenibus nec secundum habitum nec secundum actum. Sed prudentia gratuita causatur ex infusione divina. Unde in pueris baptizatis nondum habentibus usum rationis est prudentia secundum habitum, sed non secundum actum, sicut et in amentibus. In his autem qui iam habent usum rationis est etiam secundum actum quantum ad ea quae sunt de necessitate salutis, sed per exercitium meretur augmentum

infused prudence needed to cultivate acquired prudence in order to achieve a “fuller” prudence that comprised a union of the two virtues, then the third objection would provide an ideal place for Aquinas to offer such an explanation. Such an explanation, however, is not forthcoming. Instead, Aquinas offers an explanation of how infused and acquired prudence differ. When he then proceeds to explain how infused prudence is “perfected,” moreover, he makes no mention of the need to cultivate acquired prudence. To the contrary, Aquinas simply explains that when one performs acts of infused virtues, one merits their increase, and that as those virtues increase, they are perfected.

Conclusions

In the preceding sections, I argued that the texts cited in defense of some common theses about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues fall short of establishing the positions they supposedly support. My analysis of these texts, if correct, lends support to those who claim that Aquinas’s position on the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues is simply unclear. It is important to emphasize, however, that I have not argued in favor of a specific theory of the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, and I certainly have not argued that no such relationship exists. I have not even argued that the texts examined above are the only texts one might cite in defense of such a claim. I have argued only that if such a relationship does exist, proof of such a relationship must be sought elsewhere than in the texts that are commonly cited as evidence of it.

If I am correct in arguing that claims about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues are under-supported by the texts commonly cited in defense of those claims, then it is only natural to wonder where one might look for other more substantive evidence of that relationship. Aquinas, however, is of very little help in this regard. Aside from insisting that the infused virtues exist, that they are the only “true” virtues, and that they differ in important ways from their acquired counterparts, Aquinas says very little about how the infused and acquired virtues are related.⁴⁶

quousque perficiatur, sicut et ceterae virtutes. Unde et apostolus dicit, ad Heb.V, quod perfectorum est solidus cibus, qui pro consuetudine exercitatos habent sensus ad discretionem boni et mali (Leon. 8.362).

⁴⁶ In *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus: De virtutibus in communis*, a.10, ad 4, Aquinas does say that the acquired virtues can be meritorious only through the “mediation” of the infused virtues. Although this claim is frequently cited, its cash value remains unclear.

Given Aquinas's silence about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, one reasonable strategy might be to consider whether a given thesis about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues can be made *compatible* with Aquinas's account. While such a method seems vague, it actually provides considerable concrete guidance. For Aquinas does make a number of assertions about the differences between the infused and acquired virtues. For instance, we have already seen that—at least according to Aquinas—the infused and acquired virtues are specifically different, that one cannot increase the infused virtues through one's own power, and that the mean of acquired virtue differs from that of infused virtue. Aquinas also insists that the infused virtues are "proportionate" to supernatural beatitude in a way that the acquired virtues are not. For those who wish to propose theories about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, then, these explicit claims are a reasonable starting point. If one wishes to propose a theory of the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, then one should begin by explaining how the theory is compatible with Aquinas's explicit remarks. If it cannot be made to fit Aquinas's explicit remarks, then it cannot serve as a genuinely "Thomistic" account of the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues. N-V