

Summa of the Summa

Questions 64 and 65

Of the Mean of Virtue and of the Connection of Virtues

Article One: Whether Moral Virtues Observe the Mean?

Obj. One: "It would seem that moral virtue does not observe the mean."

Obj. Two: "The maximum is not a mean...not every moral virtue observes the mean."

Obj. Three: It is essential that moral virtue does not observe the mean because moral virtue attends to the extremes such as giving all to the poor is the most perfect example of mercy or liberality, Or the most perfect chastity is to give full attention to abstinence. (PM)

On the contrary: "The Philosopher says (*Ethic.ii. 6*) that *moral virtue is a habit of choosing the mean.*"

I answer that: "As already explained (Q. 55, A. 3), the nature of virtue is that it should direct man to good. Now moral virtue is properly a perfection of the appetitive part of the soul in regard to some determinate matter: and the measure of the rule of the appetitive movement in respect of appetible objects is the reason." (TA) Moral virtue has to fall in-between excesses because the extreme such as evil consists in discordance from their rule or measure. Hence, the good of moral virtue consists in conformity with the rule of reason. Therefore, the mean is the equality or conformity existing in-between excess and deficiency which can be found within moral virtue. (PM) PK tells us in his note below that passion or feelings and operations or actions are virtue's "matter", or raw material, to be shaped, formed, and directed by reason, which provides the form. Virtue's matter is like the keys on a piano. Virtue's form is like the sheet music, which tells you how much and when to play each note. Virtue is not a mean as to its form—you cannot have too much conformity to the rule of right reason; but as to its matter--you can have too much or too little of any passion.

Reply Obj. one: "Moral virtue derives goodness from the rule of reason, while its matter consists in passions or operations. If therefore we compare moral virtue to reason, then, if we look at that which it has of reason, it holds the position of one extreme, viz. conformity; while excess and defect take the position of the other extreme, viz., deformity. But if we consider moral virtue in respect of its matter, then it holds the position of mean, because it makes the passion conform to the rule of reason. As a result the Philosopher says (*Ethic, ii. 6*) that *virtue, as to its essence, is a mean state*, in so far as the rule of virtue is imposed on its proper matter;

Article One Reply Obj. one for Question 64 Of the Mean of Virtue

but it is an extreme in reference to the "best" and "the excellent," viz., as to its conformity with reason." (TA)

Reply Obj. two: The one who is morally virtue is extreme in quantity but tends to the mean in the right mode of one's action. (PM)

Reply Obj. three: The same applies to virginity and to the poor. For virginity exercises moral virtue in its expression of abstinence and in being poor and avoiding the love of money and the pursuit of wealth for the sake of wealth, yet if their reasons for being as such are immoral or for the wrong purpose it will be in excess. (PM)

Article four: Whether the Theological Virtues Observe the Mean?

Obj. one: Hope and faith are used here to show how theological virtues must hold the mean position. Why? Because hope is the mean between despair and presumption and faith is the mean between two heresies. The example given for faith being the mean between two heresies proves inaccurate. See the reply to obj. one.

On the contrary: Wherever virtue observes the mean, it is possible to sin by excess as well as by deficiency. But there is no sinning by excess against God, Who is the object of theological virtue...(PM)

I answer that: TA asserts that never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved, nor believe and hope in Him as much as we should so in this sense the theological virtues cannot only observe the mean.

Reply Obj. three: There is no mean between two heresies such as between the Nestorians and the Eutychnes. There is no relationship between balancing the mean between these two heresies. In doing so, the out is not conformity to right doctrine. Trying to balance between the Nestorian concept of Christ with two persons and two natures and between the Euthchen concept of one person with one nature does not equal or make the concept of Christ having one person and two natures. (PM) When it comes to the Theological virtues which are only observed in God in their purest sense there can be no mean, but only the perfection of and purity of the fullness of God. In this life we cannot love God enough for love always will endure with God in eternity. St. reminds us that for now we have hope and faith in God. They both will fade, but the theological virtue of love will endure forever. (PM)

Questions and Answers for Question 64

1. Do the moral virtues observe the mean? Yes, it is evident that moral virtue observes the mean. “As already explained (Q. 55, A. 3), the nature of virtue is that it should direct man to good. Now moral virtue is properly a perfection of the appetitive part of the soul in regard to some determinate matter: and the measure of the rule of the appetitive movement in respect of appetible objects is the reason.” (TA) Moral virtue has to fall in-between excesses because the extreme such as evil consists in discordance from their rule or measure. Hence, the good of moral virtue consists in conformity with the rule of reason. Therefore, the mean is the equality or conformity existing in-between excess and deficiency which can be found within moral virtue. (PM) PK tells us in his note below that passion or feelings and operations or actions are virtue’s “matter’, or raw material, to be shaped, formed, and directed by reason, which provides the form. Virtue’s matter is like the keys on a piano. Virtues form is like the sheet music, which tells you how much and when to play each note. Virtue is not a mean as to its form—you cannot have too much conformity to the rule of right reason; but as to its matter--you can have too much or too little of any passion.
2. Do the theological virtues observe the mean? TA asserts that never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved, nor believe and hope in Him as much as we should so in this sense the theological virtues cannot only observe the mean.

Question 65

Of the Connection of Virtues

Article One: Whether the Moral Virtues Are Connected with One Another?

On the Contrary: It seems that all the saints wrote in agreement that if you claim to miss anyone of the virtues you claim to be missing them all.

I answer that: “Moral virtue may be considered either as perfect or as imperfect. An imperfect moral virtue, temperance for instance, or fortitude, is nothing but an inclination in us to do some kind of good deed, whether such inclination is in us by nature or by habituation. If we take the moral virtues in this way, they are not connected: since we find men who, by natural temperament or by being accustomed, are prompt in doing deeds of liberality, but are not prompt in doing deeds of chastity.” (TA) But if taken in another way we link or connect the virtues because the moral virtues depend on all the moral virtues to manifest any particular one of them. This is so because moral virtues are personal habits that incline us to do good deeds well. (PM)

Question 65 Of the Connection of Virtues cont. Third Article

Article Three: Whether the Moral Virtues Are Better Than the Intellectual Virtues?

Obj. One: On the basis of necessity it would seem that the moral virtues are better than the intellectual virtues. This is so because the moral virtues are more necessary for life than the intellectual virtues.

I answer that: According to TA there are two ways that this subject may be addressed. One is simply and the other is relatively. Simply speaking virtue is more excellent, which has the more excellent object. (PM) “Now it is evident that the object of the reason is more excellent than the object of the appetite: since the reason apprehends things in the universal, while the appetite tends to things themselves, whose being is restricted to the particular. Consequently, speaking simply, the intellectual virtues, which perfect the reason, are more excellent than the moral virtues, which perfect the appetite.” (TA)

“But if we consider virtue in its relation to act, then moral virtue, which perfects the appetite, whose function it is to move the other powers to act, as stated above (Q. 9, A. 1), is more excellent.—And since virtue is so called from its being a principle of action, for it is the perfection of a power, it follows again that the nature of virtue agrees more with moral than with intellectual virtue, though the intellectual virtues are more excellent habits, simply speaking.” (TA)

Reply to Obj. one: The moral virtues prove to be more necessary for life than the intellectual virtues both simply and relatively. The speculative intellectual virtues, from the very fact that they are not referred to something else, as a useful thing is referred to an end, are more excellent. And this is because in them we find a type of beginning of that happiness which is present in us who have the knowledge of truth. (PM)

Article four: Whether Justice Is the Chief of the Moral Virtues?

Obj. One: Giving of one's self is proved that justice is not the chief of the moral virtues. For it is clearly known that giving of one's self is more highly of value to moral living than giving one their just deserts. Therefore liberality is apparently a greater virtue than justice...(PM)

Reply Obj. one: “True liberality cannot be apart from justice. Hence justice is simply greater than liberality, due to being more universal and also being its foundation: while liberality is greater relatively since it is an ornament of an addition to justice.” (TA) (PM)

Question 65 Article Five The Greatest Intellectual Virtue

Article five: Whether Wisdom Is the Greatest of the Intellectual Virtues?

I answer that: "As stated above (A. 3), the greatness of a virtue as to its species is taken from its object. Now the object of wisdom surpasses the objects of all the intellectual virtues; because wisdom considers the Supreme Cause, which is God, as stated at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*. And since it is by the cause that we judge of an effect, and by the higher cause that we judge of the lower effects; hence it is that wisdom exercises judgment over all the other intellectual virtues, directs them all, and is the architect of them all...." (TA)

Article six: Whether Charity Is the Greatest of the Theological Virtues?

Obj. one: Since the intellect is a greater power than the appetitive powers and faith is categorized within the intellectual virtues and hope and charity are in the appetitive powers it can only be that faith is the greatest of the theological virtues. (PM)

On the contrary: "The Apostle says (I Cor 13:13): *Now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*"

I answer that: Now none of the theological virtues can be termed greater than the others on the basis of their object for God is the object of all three. But since faith is of what is not seen and hope is of what is not possessed it would seem that they are one step removed from God as their object. But love of charity is of that which is already possessed: since the beloved is, in a manner, in the lover, and, again, the lover is drawn by desire to union with the beloved; hence it is written (I Jn 4:16): *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.* (PM)

Reply to Obj. one: There are two reasons why faith and hope are not related to charity in the same way as prudence is to moral virtue. The first is because the theological virtues raise one to have an object surpassing the human soul; whereas prudence and the moral virtues are going to things beneath man. What is above man is greater and love is more excellent to them because of knowing God who is above man. Knowledge is perfected by the known being in the knower; whereas love is perfected by the lover being drawn to the beloved...Secondly, because prudence moderates the appetitive movements pertaining to the moral virtues, but faith does not moderate the appetitive movement tending to God, which movement belongs to theological virtues; it only shows the object. And this appetitive movement towards its object surpasses human knowledge, according to Ephesians 3:19: *The charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge...*" (TA)

Questions and Answers for Question 65 on the Connection of the Virtues

1. Are the moral virtues connected with one another? Yes, “Moral virtue may be considered either as perfect or as imperfect. An imperfect moral virtue, temperance for instance, or fortitude, is nothing but an inclination in us to do some kind of good deed, whether such inclination is in us by nature or by habituation. If we take the moral virtues in this way, they are not connected: since we find men who, by natural temperament or by being accustomed, are prompt in doing deeds of liberality, but are not prompt in doing deeds of chastity.” (TA) But if taken in another way we link or connect the virtues because the moral virtues depend on all the moral virtues to manifest any particular one of them. This is so because moral virtues are personal habits that incline us to do good deeds well. (PM)

2. Are the moral virtues better than the intellectual virtues? According to TA there are two ways that this subject may be addressed. One is simply and the other is relatively. Simply speaking virtue is more excellent, which has the more excellent object. (PM) “Now it is evident that the object of the reason is more excellent than the object of the appetite: since the reason apprehends things in the universal, while the appetite tends to things themselves, whose being is restricted to the particular. Consequently, speaking simply, the intellectual virtues, which perfect the reason, are more excellent than the moral virtues, which perfect the appetite.” (TA)

“But if we consider virtue in its relation to act, then moral virtue, which perfects the appetite, whose function it is to move the other powers to act, as stated above (Q. 9, A. 1), is more excellent.—And since virtue is so called from its being a principle of action, for it is the perfection of a power, it follows again that the nature of virtue agrees more with moral than with intellectual virtue, though the intellectual virtues are more excellent habits, simply speaking.” (TA)

3. Is justice the chief of the moral virtues? Yes and no. “True liberality cannot be apart from justice. Hence justice is simply greater than liberality, due to being more universal and also being its foundation: while liberality is greater relatively since it is an ornament of an addition to justice.” (TA) (PM)

4. Is wisdom the greatest of the intellectual virtues? Yes, “As stated above (A. 3), the greatness of a virtue as to its species is taken from its object. Now the object of wisdom surpasses the objects of all the intellectual virtues; because wisdom considers the Supreme Cause, which is God, as stated at the beginning of the Metaphysics. And since it is by the cause that we judge of an effect, and by the higher cause that we judge of the lower effects; hence it is that wisdom exercises judgment over all the other intellectual virtues, directs them all, and is the architect of them all....” (TA)

Q & A Question 65 on the Connection of Virtues cont. Question 5

5. Is Charity the greatest of all the theological virtues? Yes, There are two reasons why faith and hope are not related to charity in the same way as prudence is to moral virtue. The first is because the theological virtues raise one to have an object surpassing the human soul; whereas prudence and the moral virtues are going to things beneath man. What is above man is greater and love is more excellent to them because of knowing God who is above man. Knowledge is perfected by the known being in the knower; whereas love is perfected by the lover being drawn to the beloved...Secondly, because prudence moderates the appetitive movements pertaining to the moral virtues, but faith does not moderate the appetitive movement tending to God, which movement belongs to theological virtues; it only shows the object. And this appetitive movement towards its object surpasses human knowledge, according to Ephesians 3:19: The charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge..." (TA)