Alexander Stöpfgeshoff

The Structure of the Virtues
A Study of Thomas Aquinas’s and Godfrey of Fontaines’s Accounts of Moral Goodness
Abstract

This dissertation is a study of Thomas Aquinas’s (1225–1274) and Godfrey of Fontaines’s (d. 1306) moral philosophies. In this study, I conduct a detailed analysis of two Aristotelian commitments concerning the character virtues, namely, The Plurality of the Character Virtues and The Connection of the Character Virtues. Both Aquinas and Godfrey think that there are many distinct character virtues (such as moderation and justice), however, one cannot (perfectly) possess these character virtues in separation from each other.

In Chapter I, it is established that Aquinas believes in the plurality of the character virtues not because of a specific account of the human soul, but because he is committed to a plurality in what he calls “the notion of goodness.” In Chapter II, it is argued that Aquinas’s account of virtuous action requires that there be a likeness between a person and their actions in terms of the notion of goodness explored in Chapter I. Chapters III through V lay out my account of how to reconstruct both Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s arguments for The Connection of the Character Virtues. The focus here lies on finding an interpretation that provides a valid argument for the connection of the character virtues. I argue that we ought to focus on a dependence between prudence and the character virtues. A central problem for this analysis is how to account for prudence as a unified virtue. On this issue, Godfrey provides an explicit argument that conceives of prudence as unified because prudence strikes a balance between the character virtues. Chapter VI investigates whether different groups, such as men and women, possess different types of character virtues. Godfrey offers a novel argument for the impossibility of male- and female-specific virtues. Finally, Chapter VII explores the question of how we should understand Godfrey’s account of prudence itself. I show that his discussion emphasizes the variable nature of ethics and that he endorses a view that has certain affinities with ethical particularism (in the contemporary sense).

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas; Godfrey of Fontaines; virtue; character virtue; prudence; moral goodness; medieval philosophy; medieval ethics; connection of the virtues; unity; dependence; gender; particularism; Summa Theologiae; Aristotle

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Alexander Stöpfeshoff
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I dedicate this dissertation to my Father.
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Abbreviations

Aquinas:

DM = *Questiones disputatae de malo*

InPostAn = *Expositio libri Posteriorum*

InEthic = *Sententia libri ethicorum*

InPo = *Sententia libri politicorum*

SCG = *Summa contra gentiles*

Sent. = *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*

ST = *Summa Theologiae*

QDV = *Questiones disputatae de veritate*

QDVirt. = *Questiones disputatae de virtutibus*

Quodl. = *Quodlibet*

Godfrey:

Quodl. = *Quodlibet*

QO = *Quaestiones ordinariae*

When possible, I will refer to the page numbers of the edition of Godfrey’s text in *Les Philosophes Belges (PB)* in parenthesis, for example, *Quodl. X.11 (PB.4 248-358)* When available, I will provide the lines to *Quaestiones ordinariae*, for example *QO V.75–80.*
Introduction

I. What is virtue?

Analysis of the virtues has been regarded as central to a proper account of being a good person and performing good actions for much of the history of ethics, and medieval philosophy is no exception in this regard. The medieval period’s most famous philosopher, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), devotes the bulk of his ethical writings to virtue, even explicitly stating that “all moral matters are brought back to the consideration of the virtues” (ST II.II.pro).

The reintroduction of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* into the Latin West brought with it a new theoretical ambition to understand virtue as well as a set of specific questions in this regard. Aquinas, who belongs to the first generation that explores virtue from this new perspective, aims at a comprehensive analysis of virtue, including a proper definition of virtue, an account of what virtues there are, and an examination of their nature. This also involves a study of the types of virtue, an analysis of how different virtues are related to each other, and an investigation of the nature of these relations. We may view these general questions about how the virtues are constituted as comprising a study of their structure and, in this sense, this dissertation undertakes an exploration of the structure of the virtues.

Aquinas may be the most systematic medieval thinker in respect to a theory of the virtues, but he is far from alone in this endeavor. The scholastic discussion in the Latin West, which is marked by the reintroduction of an Aristotelian conception of virtue and an inquiry concerning how an Aristotelian analysis fits with the central themes of a broadly Christian ethics, indeed provides us with one of the most detailed analyses of virtue in the history of philosophy. It constitutes both an active engagement with

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1 There has recently been an increasing interest in virtue in scholarship concerning medieval ethics. See Haldane, “Virtue Ethics in the Medieval Period”; Kent, “The Moral Life”; “Habits and Virtues.”


3 …tota materia morali ad considerationem virtutum reducta, omnes virtutes sunt ulterius reducendae ad septem.

4 For a detailed discussion of the relation between Aquinas and Aristotle, see Hoffmann, Müller, and Perkams, *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*.

5 I regard Philip the Chancellor and Albert the Great as members of this first generation. See Houser, *The Cardinal Virtues*, 42–56.
Aristotle’s account, as well as a critical discussion of his work. In the investigation below I will focus on two of the primary members of this new movement in philosophy during the thirteenth century, Aquinas and Godfrey of Fontaines (d. 1306), one of Aquinas’s brightest successors at the University of Paris.

In this study I conduct a detailed analysis of two Aristotelian commitments concerning the character virtues, namely, *The Plurality of the Character Virtues* and *The Connection of the Character Virtues*. Concerning the first, both Aquinas and Godfrey believe that there are a multitude of substantially different character virtues. In respect to the second, they maintain that if we come to understand how the various character virtues are inter-related, we will come to see that they cannot be possessed in isolation from each other, whereby perfect moderation, for example, requires that one possess all the other character virtues as well. Moreover, both Aquinas and Godfrey follow Aristotle in relying heavily upon a specific understanding of the integration of the intellectual virtue of prudence with the character virtues as they endeavor to explain the connection of the character virtues. Gaining an understanding of the precise nature of this integration is a central theme of the present work.

I am primarily concerned at this venture with why Aquinas and Godfrey hold such views on virtue. What reasons do they have for believing that there are many different character virtues, and why would one think that such distinct virtues cannot be acquired in separation from each other? The tension between these two issues is one of my primary concerns throughout the following discussion, not least because there is a general problem with how they can be combined. On the one hand, there is a risk that a more substantial account of the plurality of the character virtues will serve to support the view that it is possible to possess the character virtues in isolation from each other. On the other, a sound explanation for why we cannot possess any given character virtue without also possessing the others runs the risk of undermining their plurality.

In order to clarify the purpose of this study, I will now briefly address two concerns in recent scholarship that will feature throughout the discussion of virtue in the text that follows.

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6 See Lottin, *Psychologie et morale* and Kent, *Virtues of the Will* for a broad overview of the period as a whole.


8 This idea is often referred to as the unity of the virtues. See Chapter III below concerning my reason for not using this term. I will address Bonnie Kent’s reading, which denies that this is Aquinas’s view, in chapter IV.
(1) *Virtuous action.* Although there is no doubt that Aquinas’s account of the virtues is one of the most important parts of his ethical system, there is nevertheless little consensus among scholars concerning the role that virtue plays within his ethics as a whole. Scholars have directed attention to how the many elements of Aquinas’s ethics are seemingly independent of his conception of virtue, such as his accounts of divine and natural law, *synderesis,* and the goodness of human actions. The issue at hand here is the nature of the relation between possessing virtue and the goodness of our actions. In contemporary virtue ethics, right/good action is at times defined as what a virtuous person would characteristically do, and from this perspective, descriptions of the virtues and the virtuous person are fundamental to the description of such actions. For example, Nicholas Austin and John Haldane argue that we cannot view Aquinas’s ethics as a virtue ethics in the contemporary sense because virtue is in fact not a fundamental ethical concept for Aquinas. Others accept the idea that Aquinas’s approach is holistic, and that no part can be reduced to any other.

In my discussion of Aquinas’s position, I argue for a particular understanding of character virtue such that the various character virtues make a significant contribution to good action, which is to say that virtue is an intrinsic element of an analysis of good actions. Virtue would thus be necessary for performing the best possible actions. Moreover, we would then need virtue not merely because it facilitates good actions, rendering them more likely and easier to perform, but also because possessing virtues establishes a specific type of relation between oneself and one’s actions that is an element of what makes virtuous actions good.

(2) *Rational integration.* Many scholars have regarded Aquinas and Godfrey as representing an intellectualist strain in medieval ethical theory and moral psychology, and as such they both are targets of the voluntarist critique that focuses on the importance and value of the will in ethical matters. There is no doubt that rationality and reason are central to Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s accounts of virtue. However, there is considerable disagreement about the role that reason plays in virtue and in living a good life within this intellectualist tradition. For example, Terence Irwin places a

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9 For a summary of this disagreement, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue,* chap. 1.
10 Rosaline Hursthouse is the most prominent advocate of this perspective (*On Virtue Ethics,* chap. 1.)
12 See, for example, Westberg, *Right Practical Reason,* and Hause; “Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists.”
13 For an excellent discussion of voluntarism in this sense, see Kent, *Virtues of the Will.* Godfrey is at times regarded as going further than Aquinas in his intellectualism (Eardley, “The Foundations of Freedom in Later Medieval Philosophy: Giles of Rome and His Contemporaries”).
specific notion of the good life at the center of being a good person,\textsuperscript{14} arguing that

Aquinas believes that deliberation about one’s ultimate end yields not only an account of virtue, but also a sufficiently detailed account of the virtues. Deliberation shows that the moral precepts of the Decalogue are required by the virtues, and that we have reason to care about the interests of other people for their own sakes.\textsuperscript{15}

In this respect, being a virtuous person would involve being able to reflect correctly upon what comprises a good life. Jean Porter also argues along the same lines that prudence consists of a “translation of the general knowledge of the good” into particular situations.\textsuperscript{16} Such views rely upon some version of what Sarah Brodie has called termed the “grand end view” of practical reasoning,\textsuperscript{17} which she describes as oriented by a “blueprint of the good” that “guides its possessor in all his deliberations” and provides a basis upon which “his rational choices can be explained and justified.”\textsuperscript{18}

From an opposing perspective, Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields provocatively state that Aquinas does not regard virtuous people as sages,\textsuperscript{19} whereby the mark of a virtuous person is not a deep understanding of the natural law, which serves to define human good or perfection, but rather what they refer to as a certain commitment to good actions. Similarly, Tobias Hoffmann has recently argued that character virtue need not entail any explicit understanding of why certain actions are good in terms of the general principles of natural law.\textsuperscript{20}

The present study provides no support for a “grand end view” of deliberation in relation to either Aquinas or Godfrey – on the contrary, I will show that the correct ends needed for deliberation are intimately linked to having a certain type of character. For example, a courageous person is willing to defend their community, and what we need in this respect is to acquire the character and ends that correspond with such character traits. In this respect, it is not necessary for a virtuous person to employ some conception of a grand end, or any other type of general knowledge about goodness, insofar as the type of deliberation involved begins with ends that are linked with one’s character.\textsuperscript{21} This ought not to be comprise as some suboptimal form of

\textsuperscript{14} Irwin, \textit{The Development of Ethics}, Vol. 1, chap. 16–24.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 591.
\textsuperscript{16} Porter, “The Unity of the Virtues” and \textit{Nature as Reason}.
\textsuperscript{17} Broadie, \textit{Ethics with Aristotle}, 198–203.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 198.
\textsuperscript{19} Shields and Pasnau, \textit{The Philosophy of Aquinas}, 297.
\textsuperscript{20} Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles.” See also Caldera, \textit{Le jugement par inclination chez saint Thomas d’Aquin}.
\textsuperscript{21} Both Aquinas and Godfrey maintain that one needs to be a good person in order to be happy. However, even if contemplation is a better form of activity, it will not make us happy if we do
reasoning. I will further show that Godfrey’s account of prudence involves
the ability to resolve any possible tension that may arise between different
virtuous inclinations in particular situations, and that this does not entail a
comprehensive understanding of a good life as a whole. My reading of
Godfrey’s account of prudence will emphasize experience and not any
theoretical or general understanding of morality, as necessary for being a good
person.

II. Character virtues and intellectual virtues

The overall purpose of this discussion is to clarify the notion of character
virtue and, as an element of this endeavor, cast light upon the connection
between the various character virtues and the intellectual virtue of prudence.

It will be useful at this point to present what Aquinas regards as the primary
distinction between character virtue and intellectual virtue, which provides
the fundamental framework for Godfrey’s account as well. Briefly stated,
Aquinas believes that there are two basic types of virtues, namely, those that
care what we should do and feel, or character virtue (virtus moralis), and
those that concern how we should think, or intellectual virtue (virtus
intellectus). Possessing the first type means that we act and feel in certain
ways, while the second consists of various mental competencies. In addition,
these two types reside in two different parts of the soul, with the character
virtues associated with the appetitive soul and the intellectual virtue with the
intellectual soul. Stated otherwise, they are perfections of two different sorts
of abilities. The character virtues include such virtues as courage and
generosity, while the intellectual virtues, which are many and varied, include
prudence, science, wisdom, understanding, different types of skills, as well as
the theological virtue of faith.

Aquinas regards character virtues and intellectual virtues to be of two
differing types. The character virtues are inherently motivational, and if we
possess the virtue of courage, for example, we also wish to perform
courageous acts. A character virtue is thus always accompanied by the
motivation to act in accordance with the virtue in question. Aquinas
not possess the character virtues (Osborne, Love of Self and Love of God, 149). For Godfrey’s
discussion of this view, see Quodl. XI.6; for Aquinas’s discussion, see ST I.II.66.3.
22 My basic reason for doing so is that Godfrey accepts Aquinas’s view that character virtues
make one a good person.
23 Virtus moralis could also be translated as moral virtue.
25 ST I.II.57.1.
26 This does not mean that it is impossible to act counter to a virtue insofar as Aquinas argues
that even a virtuous person can act in a morally wrong way. For a detailed discussion of Aqui-
nas’s view, see Kent, “Dispositions and Moral Fallibility”; Kent and Dressel, “Weakness and
Willful Wrongdoing in Aquinas’s De Malo.”
maintains that this is not the case with the intellectual virtues, however, which make us capable of performing certain acts, but do not provide any motivation to do so. That is to say that an intellectual virtue does not necessarily make us want to do that which accords with it. Aquinas takes this to mean that the character virtues are closer to the true notion of virtue, and that there is a certain regard in which intellectual virtues are not virtues in the proper sense. He therefore claims that while intellectual virtue makes us good at doing something, such as geometry or carpentry, it does not make us good people. In contrast, character virtues make us good human beings in a way that intellectual virtues cannot, which is why they are virtues in the fullest sense of the term. Faith and prudence are exceptions in this regard, however, insofar as they stand in a direct relation to the character virtues, which renders them virtues in a somewhat fuller sense.

27 This difference between the intellectual virtues and the character virtues, which is basic to Aquinas’s position, means that we have to focus on the latter if we wish to understand what virtues actually are. For example, Aquinas maintains that those virtues which directly concern God, which he terms theological virtues (virtutes theologicæ), may be either character virtues or intellectual virtues. Charity, which makes us love God, and hope, which makes us trust in eternal salvation, are character virtues, while faith, which makes us believe in God, is an intellectual virtue, although it is dependent upon charity.

28 However, we cannot acquire the theological virtues through our own actions. They are instead gifts from God, who infuses them into us by grace.

29 God can thus make us become good people who are capable of performing good actions, which is to say that, from Aquinas’s perspective, God can make us virtuous by granting us infused virtue even though we can acquire character virtue through our own actions. Moreover, Aquinas takes this to mean that God gives us other character virtues along with the theological virtues, maintaining that if we have been given a virtue such as charity, then we are given all the other character virtues. Charity in fact requires the other character virtues insofar as it is incompatible with having any sort of sin, which indicates that we cannot possess charity without also possessing moderation, for example, which in this sense can be a gift from God.

27 QDVirt. 1.7.
28 Ibid.
29 Concerning charity, see QDVirt. 2.1–3 and ST II.II.23.1–8. Concerning hope, see QDVirt. 4.1 and ST II.II.18.1–8.
30 ST II.II.1.1–10.
31 QDVirt. 1.10; ST II.II.63.3. Godfrey and Aquinas disagree on this issue. Aquinas insists that the character virtues that follow from charity are of a specific type that are distinct from the virtues that we acquire by our own acts. Godfrey instead holds that they are the same character virtues, but now serve a higher end and are directed towards God. See QO XI, 516–519, and QO XIX, 114–122.
There has been an increasing interest in recent years in gaining an understanding of the notion of infused virtues in Aquinas’s thought that has been motivated by a desire to provide a more historically accurate account of his ethical project.\textsuperscript{32} Much of Aquinas’s discussion of virtue is best understood as primarily concerned with the infused virtues,\textsuperscript{33} and scholars have consequently focused on accounting for the differences between acquired and infused virtues.\textsuperscript{34} In this regard, commentators have highlighted the fact that Aristotle regards the character virtues, which wholly transform our emotional responses, as being acquired through our own actions. Aquinas maintains, however, that we can receive an infused virtue instantaneously, that we may have a conflicting emotional response involving the corresponding acquired virtue, and that infused virtues are virtues \textit{simpliciter}.\textsuperscript{35} For such reasons, scholars have concluded that his ethics cannot be regarded as Aristotelian in character.

This dissertation has a different focus and I am not concerned with whether or not Aquinas’s ethics is Aristotelian in nature. I rather seek to explore what we may think of as belonging to the core of Aquinas’s notion of the character virtues. The discussion is based upon the assumption that there must be something that warrants his view that both acquired and infused virtues are virtues. The main features that I attribute to Aquinas’s conception of virtue ought to be seen as equally concerning infused and acquired virtues.\textsuperscript{36}

\section*{III. Outline of the dissertation}

This work as a whole consists of two main parts, the first focused on Aquinas and the second on Godfrey. The scholarly debate concerning Aquinas’s ethics is immense in scope and volume, and the differing approaches to the study of his work are varied and multifaceted. The scholarly situation regarding Godfrey is quite different in that the literature addressing his work in general is limited, with his ethics being no exception.\textsuperscript{37} Nevertheless, his moral

\begin{itemize}
  \item[32] For a summary of this trend, see Pinsent, \textit{The Second-Person Perspective}, chap. 1.
  \item[33] See Kent, “Aquinas and Aristotelian Naturalism,” for a discussion of this aspect of Aquinas’s ethics.
  \item[34] For studies that address Aquinas as a non-Aristotelean, see Miner, “Non-Aristotelian Prudence in the Prima Secundae”; Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues”; Kent, “Dispositions and Moral Fallibility.”
  \item[35] I take Aquinas to think that all character virtues have a dual function (\textit{QDVirt} 1.10.ad14). Character virtues both make our emotions in line with reason and make us resist emotions which are not in line with reason. Aquinas believes that there is an asymmetry between infused and acquired virtue. Infused virtue is better at the second function and acquired with regards to the first. This does not mean that infused and acquired virtue are essentially different kinds of things and that there would be no core to his conception of virtue.
  \item[36] In my understanding of this issue I follow Harms, “Acquired and Infused Moral Virtue.”
  \item[37] For an overview of the literature on Godfrey see König-Pralong, “Godfrey of Fontaines.” There is growing interest in Godfrey’s ethics. For Godfrey’s conception of justice, see Fuchs,
philosophy deserves greater attention insofar as he possesses a considerable knowledge of Aristotle’s ethics and is a careful and critical reader of Aquinas. In addition, he explores certain ethical topics in greater depth than Aquinas, and is also an important link between Aquinas and later developments in scholastic philosophy, being an interlocutor with both Henry of Ghent (d. 1293) and John Dun Scotus (1265/66–1308).38 Most importantly, he is an interesting philosopher in his own right, even though, as John Wippel has noted, “a complete presentation of his moral philosophy still remains to be written.”39 The second part of the dissertation intends to contribute to a fuller understanding of Godfrey’s ethics, focusing on his seldom-studied Disputed Questions, which were read and discussed at the beginning of the fourteenth century.40

Furthermore, our understanding of both Aquinas and Godfrey will profit from jointly examining their work, and there are significant similarities between their positions. For example, Aquinas and Godfrey engage directly with Aristotle’s arguments,41 and while this does not mean that they always come to the same conclusions, I regard them as generally involved in similar projects.42 Consequently, a reasonable starting point for an investigation into their moral philosophies is that they share a general understanding of what virtue is,43 with a comparison of their views providing the opportunity to better understand the structure of the arguments in their respective theories of virtue. In this respect, my interpretation of Aquinas’s argument concerning the connection of the character virtues is inspired by Godfrey’s basic approach. I argue that Godfrey aims to resolve a fundamental problem difficulty in

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39 Wippel, “Godfrey of Fontaines.”
41 Godfrey never wrote any commentaries on Aristotle’s works, although he has considerable knowledge of Aristotle and the commentary tradition.
42 There are both similarities and differences between Aquinas and Godfrey in respect to metaphysics. For example, Godfrey denies that there is any real distinction between essence and existence, but he defends Aquinas’s account of substantial form (Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines).
43 This approach is supported by Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s similar views concerning the relation of happiness to contemplation (Osborne, Love of Self and Love of God, 149). In addition, Godfrey explicitly maintains that perfect happiness must entail both the vision and enjoyment of God (Quodl. VI.1 (PB. 3 109)). Joseph Stenberg has recently defended such a reading of Aquinas (“‘Considerandum Est Quid Sit Beatitudo’”). I tend to believe that Godfrey is closer to Aquinas in respect to his fundamental assumptions in ethics than he is to Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia.
Aquinas’s general discussion concerning whether prudence is a unified virtue, although he is critical of Aquinas’s tendency to connect social roles with virtues. In Chapter VII, I explore Godfrey’s conception of the role of experience in practical thought, which is an important topic that Aquinas does not address in detail.

A major issue within scholarship concerning medieval philosophy during the twentieth century was to explore the nature and scope of the influence of Aristotle and Augustine upon medieval thought. I have relatively little to say here on this topic, however, insofar as the present discussion is not intended to comprise a study of Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s sources. I instead aim at a systematic reconstruction of Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s views, and am primarily interested in formulating a coherent account of their conceptions of virtue. I also believe that it can be helpful at times in this respect to compare certain of their ideas with aspects of contemporary thought. For example, I argue in Chapter I that Aquinas’s account avoids some of the difficulties associated with a recent neo-Aristotellean of how to enumerate the character virtues.

To approach historical material in this manner is not without its shortcomings, however, not least because we risk misunderstanding what historical thinkers wish to say when trying to make sense of them in contemporary terms. I hope to remedy this problem by focusing on the questions that Aquinas and Godfrey themselves seek to answer, formulating them in their own terms and utilizing contemporary philosophy only as a means to facilitate our understanding of that to which Aquinas and Godfrey are committed.

Each of the seven chapters that comprise this dissertation focuses on a particular issue to be resolved in Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s theories of virtue. Chapters I through IV address Aquinas, while Chapters V through VII discuss Godfrey. I argue in Chapter I that Aquinas believes in the plurality of the character virtues because he is committed to a certain plurality in the notion of goodness, from which the plurality of the virtues follows. Two given character virtues are thus distinct only if they concern two different aspects of the good.

44 For a good summary of this debate, see Emery and Levering, *Aristotle in Aquinas’s Theology*, v–xiv.
45 I do not address this issue because I regard Aquinas’s commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* as primarily indicating how Aquinas understands Aristotle’s thought. I refer to this commentary only to a limited extent.
46 I view the aim of this dissertation to be similar to that which Brower expresses in *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, vii. For a discussion of this approach, see Ward, *Reconstructing Aquinas’s World*.
47 For excellent studies that are sensitive to both historical context and the contemporary debate, see, Kent, “Aquinas and Weakness of Will”; Brower and Brower-Toland, “Aquinas on Mental Representation.”
I also argue that the plurality of the virtues cannot follow directly from any division of the human soul.

I maintain in Chapter II that Aquinas believes that virtuous action requires that there be a likeness between a person and their actions in terms of the notion of goodness explored in Chapter I. I argue that Aquinas can support the claim that not only does virtue make people good, it also makes our actions good, as Aristotle famously stated.

I focus in Chapter III on how to reconstruct Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the character virtues. From his perspective, the character virtues cannot be acquired in separation from each other because of a specific type of dependence that obtains between them and the intellectual virtue of prudence. Accounting for this relationship is all that we would then need to do to support an argument for the connection of the character virtues. My analysis indicates, however, there is a major weakness in Aquinas’s discussion, namely, he does not provide proper support for the idea that prudence is a unified virtue in a relevant sense.

In Chapter IV I address an underlying tension within Aquinas’s theory between the connection of the character virtues and the foundational role he ascribes to the cardinal virtues, that is, moderation, justice, courage, and prudence. I argue that we can avert this difficulty through a proper understanding of what makes a virtue a cardinal virtue, concluding that Aquinas’s theory of the cardinal virtues does not undermine his commitment to the position that all the character virtues are connected.

In Chapter V I examine Godfrey’s account of the connection of the character virtues. He presents us with detailed categorization of a possible argument for the connection of the virtues that involves a novel account of prudence, whereby prudence strikes a certain balance between the character virtues. This function serves to explain why prudence must be a unified virtue.

In Chapter VI I investigate whether different groups possess different virtues, focusing on whether men and women possess different types of character virtue. Godfrey believes that men and woman cannot possess different kinds of virtues. He argues that because men and women have the same soul, the virtues which perfect the soul must also be of the same type for both, although he believes that women cannot acquire virtue to the fullest extent.

I turn in Chapter VII to the question of how we should understand prudence itself. I argue that Godfrey regards prudence as distinct from moral science in that it relies upon a certain type of experience. Godfrey’s discussion emphasizes what I refer to as the variable nature of ethics, and I maintain in this regard that he endorses a position that should be viewed as a form of particularism.
A note on translation: Habitus is one of those notions that is notoriously hard to translate. It is often translated as habit. The problem with this translation is that a habitus need not be a product of habituation for many medieval thinkers. Another common translation is disposition. A problem with this translation is that it risks making habitus seem to be equated with a mere propensity to act and think in a certain manner. I use the term “dispositional state” to emphasize that a habitus is a way for a person to be, which entails a disposition to act or think in a certain manner.

48 In preparing the translation of Aquinas I have consulted Summa Theologiae by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1947-48) and The Disputed Questions on the Virtues by E. M. Atkins (2012). All the translations of Godfrey are my own.

49 I translate dispositio with tendency.
Chapter I: Accounting for Plurality – How to Enumerate the Character Virtues?

Introduction

Many have thought that a good person is a virtuous person. Though being a virtuous person does not seem to consist in having a single virtue but instead seems to consist in having many different laudable character traits. A good person would be someone that is both courageous, just and generous and so forth. This raises the question what character virtues there are in the end? To answer this question, we could try to name the various positive and admirable qualities good people have. In order to do so, we might try to compile a list of the aspects of different people’s personalities that are considered to be valuable. Character traits that are generally considered to be laudable and that are associated with patterns of behavior that many people find to be agreeable. But how are we to ensure that such a list contains actual virtues, that no important virtues are missing, and that the virtues on the list cannot be divided further?

If we had a criterion to determine what counts as a character virtue, then we could use this criterion to evaluate what virtues there are. But what criterion should we adopt? This question has not received much attention in either historical scholarship or contemporary philosophy, and the study of Aquinas is no exception in this regard. The lack of attention given to Aquinas’s account is unfortunate because he explicitly discusses this type of criterion and uses it in a systematic manner to enumerate the character virtues. His approach allows for a plurality of character virtues, but does not let the virtues proliferate in an unrestricted manner.

50 For noteworthy exceptions, see Deslauriers, “How to Distinguish Aristotle’s Virtues”; Russell, Practical Intelligence and the Virtues, chap. 1–2; Frede, “A Swarm of Virtues.” I owe my awareness of the importance of this problem to Russell’s and Frede’s thought-provoking discussions.

51 Although there is an extensive and detailed discussion of Aquinas’s account of virtue, the principles that render a certain virtue distinct from others have received less attention that other issues. Austin provides a detailed study of Aquinas’s causal analysis of virtue in his recently published Aquinas on Virtue. I will here examine a particular aspect of this causal analysis, addressing how it is put to use in order to demonstrate that there are a plurality of character virtues that are distinct from each other.

52 Most studies focus on Aquinas’s taxonomy of good and bad acts. See, for example, Dewan, Wisdom, Law, and Virtue, chap. 27; Flannery, “The Multifarious Moral Object of Thomas
I am here interested in Aquinas’s method for identifying the character virtues, and my focus in this chapter is on how he distinguishes one virtue from another. Aquinas’s proposal is that in order to enumerate the separate character virtues, we need to account for the different ways of being good, which entails an enumeration of what he refers to as the different aspects (ratio) of goodness. I term this the Goodness Criterion. Aquinas maintains that neither psychological divisions, nor the areas of a person’s life can ground the distinctions between the character virtues. He instead regards the enumeration of the character virtues as a clearly normative enterprise that to a degree resides upon an account of human psychology and the structure of our lives, but is not reducible to them. At the end of this chapter I will discuss certain advantages that this approach enjoys over various alternatives that have been recently proposed.53

Aquinas’s theory concerning enumeration, including the differences that make the character virtues distinct, is central to the question that whether one can acquire the distinct character virtues independently of each other.54 I will address this question in Chapter III.

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first I explore the problem of the enumeration of the virtues that Aquinas faces. In the second I develop an interpretation of Aquinas’s criterion for enumeration, focusing on what he calls the aspect (ratio) of goodness. In the third I examine why we should prefer an interpretation that focuses on the aspects of goodness over other possible interpretations. In the final section I discuss possible advantages of Aquinas’s theory over certain recently proposed criteria.

I.1 The Enumeration Problem

I.1.1 The need for a criterion of enumeration

Daniel Russell has recently argued that moral philosophy needs to direct greater attention to the principles underlying the enumeration of the character virtues. He warns against adopting a “laundry list” approach to enumeration in which one continually adds new virtues when encountering something that seems to be a positive quality.55 Russell argues that we cannot make an overall assessment about how virtuous a person is if we do not have a more

53 This comparison will also help us understand Aquinas’s position.
54 As we have seen in the introduction, Aquinas argues that there are two types of virtues, intellectual virtues and character virtues. He maintains that virtues of character are virtues simpliciter because they make us good simpliciter, not in a qualified manner (QDVirt. 1.7). I will here focus on these kinds of virtues.
55 Russell, Practical Intelligence and the Virtues, 146ff.
determinate answer to the question of how many character virtues there are. Moreover, continuously adding new virtues would leave unresolved the question of how close a person is or is not to being fully virtuous. Aquinas’s approach to enumeration stands in sharp contrast to a “laundry list” approach. He provides us both with a method for identifying the character virtues, and with a more systematic way in which to distinguish character virtues from other positive qualities that fall short of being true virtues.

It is not surprising that Aquinas devotes a great deal of attention to the question of enumeration, particularly because he has inherited a rich and varied language regarding praiseworthy moral qualities. Given the fact that he considers a number of sources to be authoritative, he is very quickly led into a very pressing version of the enumeration problem. Briefly stated, if Aquinas aims to incorporate previous discussions of virtue, he must somehow manage the fact that the tradition does not speak about virtue in a uniform way. The problem is that Aquinas cannot simply take how previous authors have used various terms concerning virtue as a basis for how to enumerate the virtues, but must instead develop a theoretical account that enables him to evaluate and analyze the divergent usage of the existing terminology.

One might think that enumerating the virtues could consist of collecting what wise and learned people have thought them to be, and Aquinas himself read a broad range of sources on virtue, particularly Aristotle, Cicero, Macrobius, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. One seems to learn something significant about virtue from each of them, but a problem arises when their works are placed alongside each other, for it quickly becomes evident that terms concerning virtue are not used in a uniform way. Not only do some assume that there are only four virtues while others accept a much larger

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56 Russell is also concerned with enumeration because he maintains that right action needs to be understood in terms of the character virtues. My position is that Aquinas does not accept this type of view, although he does maintain that character virtues contribute to the goodness of actions. If we wish to understand good actions, we thus need to know which virtues contribute to such actions. We will address this issue in the following chapter.

57 I am not concerned directly with this question, but rather with the criterion for what makes both infused and acquired virtues distinct.

58 Sometimes this problem is referred to as the problem of individuating the virtues (Russell, Practical Intelligence and the Virtues, chap. 6.), but this would be misleading within the medieval context. The problem of individuation in scholarship on medieval philosophy concerns what makes something an individual of a certain species, such as what makes Socrates an individual human being. The problem of enumeration is instead concerned with what kinds of things there are, and the enumeration of the virtues is then analogous to how to account for what makes the human species different from other animals. For an overview of the medieval account of individuation in this sense, see Gracia, Individuation in Scholasticism, and King, “The Problem of Individuation in the Middle Ages.”

59 Aristotle is at times viewed as merely describing what the ancients thought the character virtues were. Frede convincingly argues in “A Swarm of Virtues” that this is not what he was doing.

60 The most important sources are Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, Cicero’s De Inventione, Macrobius’ Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, Augustine’s Of the Morals of the Catholic Church and On Trinity and Gregory the Great’s Commentary on Job.
number, the taxonomies presented differ as well. Against this background, a criterion by which to evaluate such a varied usage of terms is needed in order to make progress in understanding virtue. I suggest that this is exactly what Aquinas provides.

Aquinas draws a primary distinction between using terms for virtue to refer to narrowly defined dispositional states, as Aristotle does, and using them to refer to general forms of perfection, as Augustine and Gregory the Great do. In addition to the taxonomies provided by Aristotle and these two Fathers of the Church, Aquinas also accommodates those presented by Cicero and Macrobius, which include more virtues than those described by Aristotle. Although the taxonomies of Cicero and Macrobius are not consistent, since they include virtues that are central to the Christian tradition, such as patience and modesty, Aquinas has good reason to incorporate them into his account.

Aquinas employs a range of strategies and distinctions in his various works to resolve such problems, and his approach resides upon being able to show that one and the same term has been used to refer to two different things. For example, Aquinas argues that many terms concerning virtue have been used to refer both to a virtue proper, and to some other perfection that is related to a given virtue but is not itself a virtue. The latter in fact comprise a broad category. He most frequently contrasts virtue proper with a general condition of virtue, as well as a part of virtue with an act of virtue. This allows Aquinas to illustrate how the tradition has used terms concerning virtue in varying ways without introducing any fundamental conflict insofar as the same terms have been used to refer to different levels of human perfection.

We will first address how Aquinas solves the problem that terms for virtue have been used with different levels of meaning before discussing his argument concerning how we can articulate a proper criterion for enumeration.

I.1.2 Broad and narrow usage of terms for virtue

The major difficulty for Aquinas involves the ways in which terms concerning virtue are used by Aristotle, on the one hand, and by the Christian authors Augustine, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great, on the other. A good example of Aquinas’s approach is his discussion of whether courage (fortitudo) is a specific virtue, in which he raises the issue that courage cannot be a virtue

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61 See Frede, “A Swarm of Virtues,” for a discussion of Aristotle’s reason for defining the character virtues narrowly. See also Augustine, De Trinitate, VI.4; Gregory the Great, Moralia in Iob, II.

62 For an example of Aquinas’s discussion of such conflict, see ST II.II.48.1.

63 ST II.II.136.

64 ST II.II.140.

65 Aristotle develops his account of the character virtues in NE II–V.
proper because of Ambrose’s use of the notion to refer to something we need in all virtuous acts. Ambrose thus argues that courage:

alone defends the honor of the virtues and guards their command and is what wages an inexorable war on all vice, undeterred by toil, brave in the face of dangers, steeld against pleasures, unyielding to lusts, avoiding covetousness as a deformity that weakens virtue (ST II.II 123.2.ad2).

The problem from Aquinas’s perspective is that Ambrose treats courage as a general perfection, not as a more narrowly defined dispositional state concerning feelings of fear (timor) and confidence (audacia) in dangerous situations, as it is for Aristotle. There consequently appears to be a substantial conflict between Ambrose and Aristotle involving the nature of courage. Aquinas’s solution is to maintain that the term “courage” is used in this instance to refer to two different things, arguing that “Ambrose takes courage in a broad sense, as denoting firmness of mind in the face of assaults of all kinds” (ST II.II.123.2.ad2).

Aquinas’s distinction between terms concerning virtue as they are taken broadly (accipit large) and narrowly is useful for our present discussion. For example, Aquinas maintains that Aristotle uses “courage” in the narrow sense, whereby it deals strictly with feelings of fear and confidence in dangerous situations, while the broad usage, in contrast, does not actually refer to a virtue proper taken as a good dispositional state. He thus argues in reference to the cardinal virtues that virtue in the broad usage instead refers to what he terms conditions of virtue, stating that

They signify certain general conditions of the human mind, to be found in all the virtues, so that prudence is thus nothing other than a certain rectitude of discretion in any actions or matters; justice is a certain rectitude of the mind whereby a man does what he should in any matter; moderation is a tendency of the mind that establishes measure for any passions or operations so they are not carried beyond what is due; and fortitude is a certain tendency of the soul through which it is strengthened in that which is according to reason, against any assaults of the passions or hardships in actions (ST I.II.61.4c).

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66 Aquinas here quotes De Officiis I.
67 ...sola defendit ornamenta virtutum omnium, et iudicia custodit; et quae inexpiali praedio adversus omnia vitia decertat. Invicta ad labores, fortis ad pericula, rigidior adversus voluptates, avaritiam fugat tanquam labem quandam quae virtutem effeminet.
68 For Aquinas’s account of courage, see Herdt, “Aquinas’s Aristotelian Defense of Martyr Courage”; De Young, “Power Made Perfect in Weakness.”
69 Ambrosius accipit fortitudinem large, secundum quod importat animi firmitatem respectu quorumcumque impugnantium.
70 Aquinas regards Cicero and Macrobius as supporting the narrow usage. They likely endorse a hybrid view in which the cardinal virtues are used in a broad sense, while possessing virtues as part of the cardinal virtues reflects a narrow usage. Aquinas argues at length that the cardinal virtues can also be understood as specific virtues (QDVirt 5.1; ST I.II.61.1).
71 ...significant quasdam generales conditiones humani animi, quae inveniuntur in omnibus virtutibus, ita scilicet quod prudencia nihil sit aliud quam quaedam rectitudo discretionis in
In this broad way of speaking, “justice,” “moderation,” “courage,” and “prudence” refer to what Aquinas speaks of as conditions of virtue that are necessary for any virtue, comprising general features that must be present in every act of virtue. Every virtuous act is thus just, moderate, courageous, and prudent. It is important to recognize, however, that Aquinas does not maintain that the specific usage corresponds to how the term is most often used, and that the specific virtues of prudence, moderation, courage, and justice take their names from the four conditions of virtue. Aquinas makes this point clear in relation to moderation, stating that

It is customary in human speech to employ a common term in a restricted sense in order to designate the principal things to which that common term is applicable, such as how the word “city” is used antonomastically to designate Rome. Accordingly, the word “moderation” can be taken in two ways (ST II.II.141c). This indicates that Aquinas is well aware of the fact that “moderation” is often used quite broadly. He maintains that one can use the term “moderation” to refer to a narrowly defined dispositional state because such a state is paradigmatic in respect to a common condition. In the same way as we can use ‘city’ to refer to Rome because it is the paradigmatic city. He observes that “Others, however, with better reason, take these four virtues [the cardinal virtues] in accordance with their specific determinate matter; each in respect to its own matter” (ST I.II.61.4c).

It is preferable from Aquinas’s perspective to use the term “moderation” to refer to a dispositional state with a narrow scope of meaning. He holds this view for theoretical reasons, but that need not reflect upon how people speak about virtues. I take this to express a realistic perspective. If we possess enough diligence, we can come to understand what virtues there actually are, which is not a matter of how we often choose to speak. Central to Aquinas’s

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quibuscumque actibus vel materiis; iustitia vero sit quaedam rectitudo animi, per quam homo operatur quod debet in quacumque materia; temperantia vero sit quaedam dispositio animi quae modum quibuscumque passionibus vel operationibus imponit, ne ultra debitum efferantur; for-titudo vero sit quaedam dispositio animae per quam firmetur in eo quod est secundum rationem, contra quoscumque impetus passionum vel operationum labores.

Aquinas adopts this analysis from Philip the Chancellor. See Houser, The Cardinal Virtues, 1–82, for an interesting discussion of how Aquinas builds upon Philip’s analysis.

…secundum consuetudinem humanae locutionis, aliqua nomina communia restringuntur ad ea quae sunt praecipua inter illa quae sub tali communitate continentur, sicut nomen urbis ac-cipitur antonomastice pro Roma. Sic igitur nomen temperantiae dupliciter accipi potest.

Alii vero, et melius, accipiunt has quatuor virtutes secundum quod determinantur ad materias speciales; unaqueaque quidem illarum ad unam materiam.

For further discussion of Aquinas’s conception of dispositional states (habitus), see Ryosuke Inagaki, “Habitus and Natura in Aquinas”; Boland, “Aquinas and Simplicius on Dispositions.” Boland focuses on the importance of Simplicius in Aquinas’s account of dispositional states. The following chapter will illustrate that he is also a central source for Aquinas’s account of how virtues grow.
conception of virtue is that different virtues concern different things, and that the broad usage does not satisfy this demand.

I.2 Goodness and the definition of virtue

How should we enumerate the character virtues? Aquinas’s discussion as a whole displays a unified approach to this question. Even in his early *Commentary on the Sentences* he provides us with the basic principle he later utilizes for enumerating the virtues, stating that when “a different aspect of goodness is found, virtues are different according to species” (*III Sent.* 33.1.1.1c). The general idea is that when we want to know what kinds or species of virtue there are, we need to look for differences in goodness. The aspects of goodness that are relevant to human virtues are what Aquinas terms the rational good, arguing that “the good to which human virtue is proximally ordered is the good of reason” (*III Sent.* 33.1.1.1c). We can call this principle the Goodness Criterion, which is directly referred to when Aquinas enumerates the virtues in *Secunda Secundae*. Aquinas states, for example, that “Since virtue is directed to the good, wherever there is a specific aspect of the good, there must be a specific virtue” (*ST* II. II. 81.4c.).

The Goodness Criterion may be formulated as follows:

**Goodness Criterion**

A virtue is distinct from another virtue insofar as there is a difference in respect to the aspects of rational goodness found in that which they concern (their respective objects).

Why does Aquinas endorse this criterion? In his most detailed discussion of enumeration, which is found in *Disputed Questions on the Virtues* 1.12, he presents the general argument that goodness provides a basis for enumerating the virtues, maintaining that an enumeration of the different types of a given thing must be associated with the definition of that thing itself. In respect to justifying the specific reason for endorsing the Goodness Criterion, Aquinas begins by stating that “Things differ in species in respect to that which is

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76 ...invenitur diversa ratio boni, sunt diversae virtutes secundum speciem.
77 The two notions of “good of reason” (bonum rationis) and “aspect of goodness” (ratio boni) should not be confused. Aquinas argues that the different aspects of goodness that are relevant to human virtues constitute the good of reason. The discussion of the relation between goodness and rationality in Aquinas is a large and complex topic. For a detailed discussion of the rational good see Porter, *Nature as Reason*.
78 Bonum autem ad quod humanae virtutes proxime ordinantur, est bonum rationis, contra quam esse est malum hominis, ut dicit Dionysius in Lib. de Divin. Nom.
79 ...virtus ordinetur ad bonum, ubi est specialis ratio boni, ibi oportet esse specialem virtutem...
formal in the things themselves” (QDVirt 1.12c), which is to say that only formal differences are relevant because form makes something into what it is. For example, it is the form of the statue that makes bronze into a statue and not some other type of bronze object. Two different bronze objects can thus have the same matter, but they differ in form. How do we identify what is formal? Aquinas argues in this regard that

The formal in each thing is that which completes its definition. The last difference decides the species. This is why what is defined differs specifically from other things by means of the last difference (QDVirt 1.12c).

If we want to identify what is formal in any given thing, we need to turn to its definition and, specifically, to what makes the definition complete. For example, a human being is a rational animal, which is to say that rational is what completes the definition of human being and distinguishes us from other animals. It is thus our rationality that renders us a distinct species of animal.

If we wish to know what distinguishes the virtues, we should examine what completes the definition of virtue. Aquinas argues that

If the last difference itself can be formally multiplied in respect to different aspects, then what is defined is further divided into different species with respect to this difference itself (QDVirt 1.12c).

Stated briefly, if the process of identifying formal elements can be continued, we can enumerate further types of what is defined. Aquinas thereby upholds what may be referred to as the Completeness Principle, which may be stated as follows:

The Completeness Principle
If there are differences within what completes the definition of X, there are different kinds of X.

For Aquinas, the enumeration of virtue in terms of goodness follows from his commitment to the Completeness Principle. It is because Aquinas accepts that it is goodness that completes the definition of virtue that he endorses the Goodness Criterion.

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80 …unumquodque diversificatur secundum speciem secundum id quod est formale in ipso.
81 We will later address Aquinas’s view that justice and generosity have the same matter and differ only in form.
82 Formale autem in unumquodque est id quod est completivum definitionis eius. Ultima enim differentia constituit speciem: unde per eam differt definitum secundum speciem ab alis.
83 …et si ipsa sit multiplicabilis formaliter secundum diversas rationes, definitum in species diversas dividitur secundum ipsius diversitatem.
That which completes the definition and is ultimately formal in the definition of virtue is goodness, for virtue is defined, in the widest sense, as that which makes us and our action good (as is evident from NE 2.6). Therefore, human virtue, about which we here speak, should be differentiated with respect to kinds according to how the aspect of goodness is differentiated (QDVirt 1.12c).

From Aquinas’s perspective, if we have not defined virtue properly, then we cannot enumerate the virtues properly either, which is to say that enumerating the virtues follows a proper definition of virtue. In addition, because he endorses the Completeness Principle, nothing other than differences in goodness can enumerate the virtues. The definition of virtue will enable us both to differentiate virtue from non-virtue, or other dispositional states that are not virtues, and to identify what kinds of virtues there are. I take it that this is why Aquinas often repeats the Aristotelian dictum “virtue makes us and our actions good” when answering whether X is or is not a virtue. This assertion serves as a reminder of his definition of virtue and of what we are looking for when trying to answer whether or not X is a specific kind of virtue. From Aquinas’s perspective, the only thing that can prove that X is a specific kind of virtue is that it would make us and our actions good in a specific way. Although this clearly does not mean that enumeration is an easy task, Aquinas has nevertheless given us a framework for how to proceed in this regard. It is indeed clear from his own discussion of virtue that enumerating the character virtue correctly is an extensive task.

But why does Aquinas argue that only the formal element of the definition can be used as a principle of enumeration? Formal priority follows from the type of hylomorphic analysis that he employs in this context. Even though virtues have neither form nor matter in the strict sense, Aquinas’s position is that this manner of analysis can be used to understand the virtues, whereby we can analyze virtues as having both formal and material elements. Aquinas thus maintains that virtues may be said to have matter in two senses, namely,

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84 Illud autem quod est completivum et ultimum formale in definitione virtutis, est bonum: nam virtus universaliter accepta sic definitur: virtus est, quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddi: ut patet in Lib. Ethic. Unde et virtus hominis, de qua loquimur, oportet quod diversificetur secundum speciem, secundum quod bonum ratione diversificatur.

85 One might think that the efficient causes of virtue could enumerate certain types of virtue, for example the acquired and the infused virtues. However, Aquinas does not accept that these types of virtue are distinguished from each other merely by having different efficient causes – they are not distinct from each other merely because of how they came about. Aquinas instead maintains that acquired and infused virtues are different because they direct us to different types of good, namely, human good and divine good. He thinks that that while the human good can be acquired by habituation because it is of a specific type, this is not the case with the divine good. Virtues directed towards God and the divine good would be impossible to obtain if God did not cause us to have them. While this issue is not central for the present discussion, we must note that Aquinas has no other approach to enumerating the virtues (QDVirt 1.10) I follow on this point Mattison, “Thomas’s Categorizations of Virtue,” 225–40.

86 For example, see QDVirt. 2.2; QDVirt. 4.1; ST I.II.109.1; ST II.II.123.1.
\textit{matter-in-which} and \textit{matter-about-which}.\textsuperscript{87} That is to say that virtues have matter both in the sense that they inhere in something, and in the sense that they are about different things, although in neither respect can matter independently serve to enumerate the virtues.

Aquinas’s view is that virtue may be said to have \textit{matter-in-which} insofar as they are accidents that inhere in a substance such that the various powers of the human soul comprise the subject of virtues. Prudence, for example, has the intellectual soul as its subject.\textsuperscript{88} It is important for our discussion to note that Aquinas denies that the subject of virtue can be used to enumerate the virtues. He denies both that there is a virtue of an entire soul, and that there is only one virtue for every power of the soul, arguing that

\begin{quote}
Something is an object of a power and an object of a dispositional state under different aspects. For a power enables us simply to do something, such as trust or be angry, while a dispositional state enables us to do something well or badly, as Aristotle says (\textit{NE} 2.5). Therefore, where there is a different aspect of good, there will be a different objective aspect with respect to the dispositional state, although not with respect to the power. That is why one power can come to possess several dispositional states (\textit{QDVirt} 1.12ad4).\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Aquinas thus maintains that what distinguishes a power is not the same as what distinguishes ways of being good, or how to use that power well. This is why Aquinas holds that the structure of the soul does not explain how many character virtues there are.

Aquinas also states that virtues possess \textit{matter-about-which}, arguing that virtue concerns what he terms the material object. A distinct feature of his theory of virtue is that he views different virtues as being about different things, and that a given virtue disposes one to act well in relation to what that virtue is about. Dispositional states extend to a set number of things,\textsuperscript{90} whereby Aquinas maintains that moderation, for example, disposes one to act well in respect to physical pleasures.\textsuperscript{91} That is to say that given character virtues concern different types of matter in the same way that one might regard geometry and biology as concerning different things. Geometry thus differs from biology because it concerns the properties and relations of points, lines, surfaces, and solids, while biology concerns living organisms. What a given virtue concerns with may be referred to as the object (\textit{objeictum}) of a certain

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{ST} I.II.55.41c.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{QDVirt}. 1.2–4.
\textsuperscript{89} Ad quartum dicendum, quod non secundum camdem rationem est aliquid obiectum potentiae et habitus. Nam potentia est secundum quam simpliciter possimus aliquid, puta irasci vel confidere; habitus autem est secundum quem aliquid possimus bene vel male, ut dicitur in Ethic. Et ideo ubi est alia ratio boni, est alia ratio obiecti quantum ad habitum, sed non quantum ad potentiam; propter quod contingit in una potentia multos habitus esse.
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{ST} I.II.52.1–4.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{ST} II.II.141.3. For a detailed discussion of Aquinas’s account of moderation, see Butera, “On Reason’s Control of the Passions in Aquinas’s Theory of Temperance.”
kind of virtue – Aquinas even states that it is the object that binds (determinatur) a virtue to a specific type. However, the fact that virtues are distinguished by their objects does not provide a substantial answer to the question of how to enumerate the virtues insofar as the question remains concerning how to distinguish between the different objects of virtue, or what virtues are about. Aquinas employs an important aspect hylomorphic metaphysics in this discussion, namely, form possesses a certain priority over matter, whereby there is no independent way in which to establish matter without form. We thus need to know what he refers to as the formal object in order to know what the material object is – we cannot determine what a given virtue is about without knowing the aspect under which something is an object of a virtue. Moreover, only those differences relevant to aspects of goodness are important for enumerating the virtues.

Aquinas utilizes the example of vision to illustrate why he holds that form possesses a certain priority, asking what distinguishes vision from the other senses. The general notion is that different things can be objects of vision if they are colored, which entails that the aspect (ratio) relevant to distinguishing vision from the other senses is color. All colored things are thus possible objects of vision, with other differences between colored things being irrelevant to whether such things are objects of vision. For example, both large and small things can be objects of vision as long as they are colored, while a transparent thing, such as a clear sheet of glass, cannot be an object of vision since it has no color. Aquinas argues in this regard that

What is accidental does not change a thing, but only what is per se. That is why when the material object changes, the power or dispositional state does not; the latter only changes if the formal object does so: the power to see is the same whether we are looking at stones, or people, or the sky. That is because the object then changes only qua matter, not qua form, or in respect to what it is to be visible (QDVirt 2.4c; see also III Sent. 27.2.4.1ad3). Even if stones, people, and the sky are different things, they all are objects of vision because they all have color. Aquinas thus regards color as the formal element under which something is an object of vision, and he presents

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92 ST I.II.55.4.
93 For an overview of Aquinas’s hylomorphic metaphysics, see Brower, Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World, chap. 5–7; “Matter, Form, and Individuation.”
94 For an overview of Aquinas’s account of perception, see Lisska, Aquinas’s Theory of Perception.
95 Et ea quae sunt per accidens non variant rem, sed solum ea quae sunt per se: ideo materialis diversitas obiecti non diversificat potentiam vel habitum, sed solum formalis. Una est enim potentia visiva, qua videmus et lapides et homines et caelum, quia ista diversitas obiectorum est materialis, et non secundum formalem rationem visibilis.
analogous hylomorphic accounts for the various specific emotions.  

For example, since the objects of fear are the kind of things that can be perceived as dangerous, we need to identify the things that can be perceived as dangerous if we want to identify the objects of fear. The structural similarities are indeed striking when we compare Aquinas’s analyses of fear and courage. He first asks whether fear/courage is an emotion/virtue, and then asks whether fear/courage is a specific emotion/virtue, which I take as evidence that Aquinas seeks to employ the same method when he is enumerating both emotions and virtues.

Aquinas provides further informative examples of the formal object’s priority over the material object in his commentary on the Posterior Analytics, in which he argues that even if there is great difference between the human voice and the sounds of inanimate things, they all are objects of music as one and the same science. He states that

human voices differ a great deal according to their nature from the sounds of inanimate bodies; but because the consonance of human voices and the sounds of inanimate bodies are considered according to the same principles, the science of music, which considers both, is one science (InPostAn I.41.11).

However, Aquinas argues that even though mathematics and the natural sciences study the same objects (physical bodies), they are different sciences because though do so under two different formal principles. Mathematics considers physical bodies purely as quantity (quantitates), while the natural sciences consider them under the aspect of motion (motus), which indicates that formal analysis is able to show both unity when something is apparently different as well as difference when something is apparently similar. An account of the virtues in terms of goodness can thus show that one and the same virtue can concern seemingly different things, and that two virtues that concern seemingly similar things are in fact different. Virtue concerns only goodness from Aquinas’s perspective, and enumerating the virtues must proceed in reference only to goodness and to no other difference.

One might object that the Goodness Criterion cannot function as a criterion for enumerating the virtues because it is too abstract and overly thin. Simply
stating that the virtues are to be enumerated in relation to an aspect of goodness does not initially seem to get us very far. However, the Goodness Criterion is intended to indicate what differences we need to look for and how to proceed when enumerating the virtues. Moreover, Aquinas utilizes a thicker notion of moral goodness when he discusses specific character virtues, whereby he maintains that there are four generic ways in which a rational being can be morally good: (1) the good of corresponding to reason (consistens in consideratione rationis), (2) the good according to right and due (recti et debiti), (3) the good of restraining the passions (refraenandi passiones), and (4) the good of firmness (firmitas). He regards these aspects of goodness as basic in a certain sense and as comprising the building blocks we use when constructing a taxonomy of the virtues. We will discuss in Chapter IV how Aquinas maintains there are four cardinal virtues because of these four generic types of goodness.

Whenever Aquinas seeks to demonstrate that something is a specific character virtue, he does so in a two-step fashion. First, he demonstrates that the thing in question is related to one of the four generic aspects of moral goodness; second, he shows that it has a specific way of expressing that aspect of goodness. A case in point is Aquinas’s argument for why piety is a distinct virtue.

Since the nature of justice then consists in rendering another person his due, wherever there is a special aspect of something due to a person, there is a specific virtue. Now, a thing is indebted in a special way to that which is its connatural principle of being and government. And piety regards this principle inasmuch as it pays duty and homage to our parents and country and to those who are related thereto. Therefore, piety is a specific virtue (ST I.II.101.3c).

Piety is thus considered to be a specific virtue because of the specific way it expresses duties one has in relation to one’s parents and country. We have seen that Aquinas has an explicit criterion for how to enumerate the virtues. We will now examine certain instances of how he employs that criterion in order to evaluate divergent uses of the various terms for virtue, relying upon his informed analyses of whether or not his sources use these

101 ST I.II.61.3c.
102 Cum autem ad rationem iustitiae pertineat quod debitum alii reddat, ubi inventur specialis ratio debiti alciui personae, ibi est specialis virtus. Debetur autem aliquid specialiter alciui quia est connaturale principium producens in esse et gubernans. Hoc autem principium respicit pietas, inquantum parentibus et patriae, et his qui ad haec ordinantur, officium et cultum impendit. Et ideo pietas est specialis virtus.
103 There is a possible problem with this suggestion, namely, why is piety concerned with both parents and country? Why is there not a specific duty towards one’s country and another towards one’s parents? I take Aquinas to mean that we have the same sort of duty to everyone upon whom we depend for our life and welfare, including both our parents and our country. He would then argue that relations to one’s parents and country are formally similar and only materially different. If Aquinas is wrong concerning this particular type of similarity, it would indicate only that he has applied his criterion incorrectly, not that the latter should be revised.
terms to in fact refer to virtues. I will here address two relevant examples of when such terms do not refer to virtues proper, such as when they refer only to an act of virtue or a part of virtue.

I.2.1 Merely acts of virtue

Aquinas argues in the *Secunda Secundae* that kindness (*beneficentia*) should not to be viewed as a virtue separate from charity, but only as referring to an act of charity, which enables one to love both God and one’s neighbor.\(^{104}\) Aquinas maintains that kindness is not a virtue because there are no differences in respect to the aspect of goodness with which both kindness and charity are concerned. He states that

Virtues are diversified according to diverse aspects of the object. The formal aspect of charity and kindness is the same, for, as is clear from what was stated above, both regard a common aspect of the good. Kindness is not a distinct virtue from charity, but is the name of a certain act of charity (*ST* II.II.31.4c).\(^ {105}\)

Aquinas’s reason for denying that kindness refers to an actual virtue is that charity as a virtue concerns love, and it is part of having charity to be kind toward those whom one loves. This leads Aquinas to argue that being kind is not a separate virtue from charity, but merely an act of charity. This point may be compared to his analysis of pity, in which he argues that pity is a separate virtue because some specific aspects of goodness directly relate to showing pity. Aquinas states in this respect that

Joy and peace add nothing to the aspect of the good that is the object of charity, and so they do not require virtues other than charity. But pity regards a specific aspect, namely, the unhappiness of the individual to whom pity is shown (*ST* II.II.30.3ad2).\(^ {106}\)

While kindness is thus only an act of showing love, pity is a specific type of concern for the unhappiness and misery of other people. This is an example of how Aquinas, on the basis of the *Goodness Criterion*, avoids having virtues proliferate simply because various terms are used to describe human perfection.

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\(^ {104}\) *ST* II.II.27.8.

\(^ {105}\) ...virtutes diversificantur secundum diversas rationes obiecti. Eadem autem est ratio formalis obiecti caritatis et beneficentiae, nam utraque respicit communem rationem boni, ut ex praedictis patet. Unde beneficentia non est alia virtus a caritate, sed nominat quandam caritatis actum.

\(^ {106}\) ...gaudium et pax nihil adiciunt super rationem boni quod est obiectum caritatis, et ideo non requirunt alias virtutes quam caritatem. Sed misericordia respicit quandam specialem rationem, scilicet miseriam eius cuius miseretur.
I.2.2 Integral parts of virtue

A distinctive feature of Aquinas’s account of virtue is that virtues are regarded as having parts, which is an idea he adopts from Cicero and Marcrobius. Aquinas argues that virtues may possess what he terms integral parts, which are positive qualities needed for virtue that by themselves fall short of being virtues. He states that “First, in likeness to integral parts, the things needed for a perfect act of a virtue are called the parts of that virtue.” (ST II.II.48.1c)\(^{107}\)

Such qualities are parts of a virtue in the sense that they construct a virtue and are needed for there to be a virtue. Aquinas refers to them as integral parts because they make up some specific virtue in the same way that parts of a house make up the house.

Let us explore two examples of qualities that may be regarded as parts of virtues. Such parts are not themselves virtues. First, Aquinas argues that endurance (sustinere) is not a virtue proper but should rather be viewed as a part of the virtue of courage. While the ability to endure is a positive quality, it cannot be a virtue proper because it is something that can be used badly in the sense that we can endure hardships for the wrong reasons. Enduring hardships is important for an act of courage, but by itself it is not a way of being good because it can also be a part of non-virtuous actions. Endurance is thus not a way of being good, but can be useful for being good, and it is part of the virtue of courage in the sense that it is needed for acting courageously.\(^ {108}\)

Courage entails endurance in the sense that we are courageous when enduring hardships for the right reasons.

Aquinas offers a similar analysis of the positive intellectual qualities relevant to prudence.\(^ {109}\) For example, foresight is a positive quality relevant to being a good person because it is central to deliberation, but it is not by itself a virtue. Foresight is instead a part of virtue in a manner analogous to how endurance is a part of courage. It is not by itself a way of being good, and although it is needed for prudence, it can also be possessed by non-virtuous and even vicious people.\(^ {110}\)

The general idea upon which the notion of a part of virtue resides is that terms which describe positive qualities do not necessarily describe virtues proper. This serves to limit the number of virtues we need to postulate. Aquinas thus provides an approach in which virtues do not proliferate without end that also renders our understanding of virtue as a whole more secure.

\(^ {107}\) Uno modo, ad similitudinem partium integralium, ut scilicet illa dicantur esse partes virtutis alicuius quae necesse est ad perfectum actum virtutis illius.

\(^ {108}\) ST II.II.128.

\(^ {109}\) For a detailed discussion of Aquinas’s theory concerning parts of prudence, see Saarinen, “The Parts of Prudence.”

\(^ {110}\) ST II.II.49.6.
We have seen how Aquinas’s criterion of enumeration is intended to work. Let us now address why we should ascribe to Aquinas the Goodness Criterion rather than other ways in which to enumerate the virtues.

I.3 Other possible interpretations

The centrality of the Goodness Criterion is not always recognized. For example, Porter argues that “because the faculties of the intellect, the will, desiring, and irascible passions are all distinct, each has its proper virtue.”\footnote{Porter, “Virtues and Vices,” 267. Minor also appears to propose that Aquinas depends directly upon how he distinguishes between the emotions (Thomas Aquinas on the Passions, 287–99).} This would seem to suggest that it is the division of the soul that grounds the division of the virtues. Porter claims elsewhere that Aquinas maintains that virtues are distinguished by paradigmatic actions, but provides no criterion for how to distinguish paradigmatic actions.\footnote{Porter, Nature as Reason, 182–84.} We thus need to explore Aquinas’s commitment to the Goodness Criterion rather than other possible criteria for enumeration.

I.3.1 Psychological differences

Virtues have been considered to be perfections of the soul from at least the time of Plato, who argues in the Republic that there are four virtues based upon how the human soul is structured.\footnote{The Republic 434d–441c. Plato argues that there is one virtue for each part of the soul, with justice being the virtue of the harmony between the parts.} The number and structure of the virtues would thus correspond to the number of parts of the human soul. Aquinas clearly does not endorse such a model, not least because he maintains that there are more virtues than parts of the soul, or what he refers to as powers of the soul.\footnote{For a comprehensive overview of Aquinas’s conception of the soul, see Pasnau, Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature, 75–89.} For example, Aquinas views justice and generosity as specific virtues that pertain to the same part of the soul. Furthermore, even if the structure of the soul might provide an initial general division of the virtues, it does not provide a final division. The explanation for why Aquinas does not accept that the powers of the soul can serve as the basis for a division of the virtues is that he endorses the idea that a difference in the object of a given virtue follows from a difference in its subject. He thus states that

Because diversity of powers follows the generic conditions of the objects, while diversity of habits follows the specific conditions, so wherever there is
a diversity of powers, there is a diversity of dispositional states, but not the converse (ST I.II.56.2c).\textsuperscript{115}

Although the division of the soul has implications for the division of the virtues, Aquinas argues that a difference in aspect follows a difference in power. This indicates that the aspect of goodness is foundational to an actual enumeration of the virtues, not the division of the soul itself.

It would also seem possible to base the division of the character virtues upon the passions. Aquinas generally follows Aristotle’s description of the character virtues as concerned with the passions with the exception of justice, which is associated with the will.\textsuperscript{116} Once again, however, Aquinas does not accept that this psychological division suffices for a division of the virtues. He explicitly addresses the issue of whether the character virtues differ in respect to the various objects of the passions and concludes that

The perfection of a virtue depends on reason, while the perfection of a passion depends on the sensitive appetite. Consequently, virtues must be differentiated according to their relation to reason, and the passions according to their relation to the appetite. Therefore, the objects of the passions, according to how they are variously related to the sensitive appetite, cause the different kinds of passions; while, according to how they are related to reason, they cause the different kind of virtues (ST I.II.60.5c).\textsuperscript{117}

The problem is that that character virtues often concern more than one passion. For example, courage is concerned with both fear and confidence, and it finds the mean between these two passions.\textsuperscript{118} In a similar manner, moderation is not only concerned with pleasure, but also with love and desire. The reason we can say that having a good inclination towards fear and daring is a virtue is that it comprises a way of being good for a rational being. We may conclude that, for Aquinas, a correct analysis of human emotions does not provide us with what we need to enumerate the character virtues correctly,\textsuperscript{119} for we instead need to tie an analysis of the emotions to the notion of goodness. The reason why confidence and fear are relevant emotions thus

\textsuperscript{115} …quia diversitas potentiarum attenditur secundum genera conditiones obiectorum, diversitas autem habituum secundum speciales; unde ubicunque est diversitas potentiarum, est diversitas habituum, sed non convertitur.

\textsuperscript{116} ST I.II.56; QDVirt 1.12. See also Kent, “Habits and Virtues.”

\textsuperscript{117} Respondeo dicendum quod perfectio virtutis ex ratione dependet, perfectio autem passionis, ex ipso appetitu sensitivo. Unde oportet quod virtutes diversificentur secundum ordinem ad rationem, passiones autem, secundum ordinem ad appetitum. Obiecta igitur passionum, secundum quod diversimode comparantur ad appetitum sensitivum, causant diversas passionum species, secundum vero quod comparantur ad rationem, causant diversas species virtutum.

\textsuperscript{118} ST I.II.60.4.

\textsuperscript{119} Aquinas would agree with Hursthouse’s critique of Urmson’s division of the virtues in that the latter cannot reside upon the division of the emotions (Hursthouse, “A False Doctrine of the Mean”; Urmson, “Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean”).
involves how they are related to the good of being firm. When we come to understand that being firm is something good, we can properly identify the emotions that are relevant to being firm, but we can never correctly identify the object of virtue without considering the formal aspect under which something is an object of a virtue.

In summary, psychological divisions are not irrelevant to enumerating the virtues. Virtues are perfections of our powers, and our psychological nature matters for what virtues we possess, but psychological divisions cannot be taken at face value as the basis for the enumeration of the virtues from Aquinas’s perspective.

I.3.2 Areas of life as the object of virtue

One might claim that virtues are distinguished by the different areas of life, such as when one would maintain that justice is the virtue concerned with relationships with other people. But treating an area of life at face value in the enumeration of the virtues has a direct problem, that is, we need a means to distinguish between the different areas of life. In addition, Aquinas’s commitment to the Goodness Criterion clearly implies that an area of life cannot function as the basis for drawing distinctions between the virtues. We will consider two examples in this regard, namely, the shared object of justice and generosity, and the actions and duties of a soldier.

Aquinas states that wealth is the object of both justice and generosity. We have seen that Aquinas maintains that we need to take into consideration both what virtue concerns, and the aspect under which a given virtue concerns something. He thus argues that both justice and generosity concern wealth, or what can be measured in terms of wealth, insofar as justice concerns debt owed to another person (debitus), which is measured in wealth, while generosity is concerned with wealth because wealth is what can be freely given (donabilis). Aquinas thus remarks that generosity is similar to justice in two ways, stating that “it is directed chiefly to another” and that “it is concerned with external things… albeit under a different aspect” (ST II.II.117.5c). However, the fact that justice and generosity concern the same thing does not make them the same virtue because they concern that thing under different aspects, which is to say that the reasons why justice and generosity concern wealth are different. The important difference between these two virtues is illustrated by the fact that it is not generous to return what one has borrowed since it is never generous to give when one is obligated to do so. Justice and generosity are thereby different virtues even if they are

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120 III Sent. 27.2.4.2. For Aquinas’s discussion of justice, see ST II.II.58. Aquinas is concerned in the present example with what he calls particular justice, not general justice. For Aquinas’s discussion of generosity, see ST II.II.117.

121 Primo quidem, quia principaliter est ad alterum, sicut et iustitia. Secundo, quia est circa res exteriores, sicut et iustitia, licet secundum aliam rationem, ut dictum est.
concerned with the same thing insofar as being generous and just are different ways of being good.¹²² For Aquinas, an analysis of what is entailed by being good in some area of life is what grounds any distinction between the virtues.

The *Goodness Criterion* also permits Aquinas to maintain that one and the same action can be viewed as the act of two distinct virtues. He states, for example, that

> Nothing prevents two specific aspects (to which two specific virtues correspond) to coincide in the same material object. Just as a soldier, by defending his king’s fortress, fulfills both an act of courage, by facing the danger of death for a good end, and an act of justice, by rendering due service to his lord (*ST* II.II.104.2.1).¹²³

The act of defending the king’s castle is here viewed both as an act of courage, because the soldier is risking his life for a good end, and as an act of justice, because he is following a righteous command. This indicates that Aquinas does not consider identifying a part of a life, such as one’s role as a soldier guarding a castle, to be sufficient for correctly distinguishing the virtue. The soldier in fact expresses two ways of being good with one action – he is a person who is both willing to risk his life for a good end, and loyal to his commander. When we understand the moral goodness of this soldier, we see that he is good in two distinct ways.

A further problem with regarding a specific part of life as the basis for enumerating the virtues is that Aquinas is prepared to view virtues that concern life as a whole, such as charity and prudence, as specific virtues. For example, charity is important to one’s entire life, not simply to some specific part of it, but it concerns a specific aspect of the good that is unique to it, namely, the divine good. That is to say that charity is a specific virtue because it directs us to have the correct relation to God and the divine good. Charity transforms one’s entire life, but it nevertheless is a specific virtue according to the *Goodness Criterion*.¹²⁴

In summary, Aquinas’s commitment to the *Goodness Criterion* indicates that he does not view the enumeration of the character virtues as a

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¹²² It is a central point in Aquinas’s theory that justice and generosity can be regarded as distinct virtues insofar as it is important for him to be able to claim that possessing the cardinal virtues comprises a base level of human decency. While a decent person returns what she borrows and does not steal or take what is not hers, giving freely is a further human perfection beyond some threshold of human goodness. For Aquinas, generosity depends on justice in the sense that if one does not respect what belongs to oneself and others, one cannot be generous. Aquinas thus argues that it is not generous to steal in order to give to another.

¹²³ … nihil prohibet duas speciales rationes, ad quas duae speciales virtutes respiciunt, in uno et eodem materiali obiecto concurrere, sicut miles, defendendo castrum regis, implet opus fortitudinis non refugiens mortis pericula propter bonum, et opus iustitiae debitum servitium domino suo reddens.

¹²⁴ For an overview of the role of charity in Aquinas’s ethics as a whole, see Decosimo, *Ethics as a Work of Charity*.  

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normatively-neutral enterprise. Although enumerating the virtues may be reliant to some extent upon an account of human psychology or the structure of human life in general, it can never be reduced to them. It is only by providing a proper analysis of human good that we can enumerate the character virtues correctly. Psychological difference matters in this respect only insofar as it is relevant to the analysis of goodness.

I.4 Some advantages over other proposed accounts

I.4.1 Desire and circumstances

Marguerite Deslauriers has presented an interpretation of Aristotle’s view that character virtues are enumerated by “desires for different kinds of goods.” It should be expected that her discussion would share certain similarities with that of Aquinas since both endeavor to recount the main features of NE. But what kinds of goods does she refer to, and how do we enumerate the relevant kinds of goods?

Deslauriers argues that the circumstances in which desires arise are what distinguish justice from generosity. She states that

> It will still be the case that ‘desires for the good that have to do with money’ might be the desires of what Aristotle will call a generous action, or a magnificent action or even a just action. In order to make more fine-grained distinctions among virtues Aristotle will have to appeal to the external circumstances in which the desires occur.

From this perspective, it is desires for the good plus circumstances that distinguishes the virtues, whereby justice and generosity would both concern the same good (wealth), but arise in different kinds of circumstances. We can refer to this view as the Desire+Circumstance Criterion.

However, the enumeration problem reappears when we take into consideration the circumstances of specific virtues. What makes situations similar so that we can regard them as specific circumstances of justice? Aquinas has an attractive answer to this question, namely, we identify the circumstances of justice in respect to the aspect of goodness that is manifested when we do what we owe to each other. Justice thus concerns what we have an obligation to do, while generosity does not. That is to say that we are placed in the circumstance of justice when we have borrowed something since acting well then entails an

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125 Deslauriers, “How to Distinguish Aristotle’s Virtues,” 114.
126 I will not discuss here whether Aquinas’s views could serve as an interpretation of Aristotle, although I do not regard the Goodness Criterion to be incompatible with anything Aristotle states.
127 Ibid, 115.
obligation to return the item borrowed,\textsuperscript{128} which indicates that borrowing is a specific circumstance of justice. But if we do not have a way in which to distinguish the circumstances in respect to which justice is identified, then the \textit{Desire+Circumstance Criterion} cannot function as an independent criterion for enumerating the character virtues.

One might object at this point that the \textit{Goodness Criterion} fares no better in this regard, and that we need a new criterion in order to distinguish aspects of goodness from each other. Aquinas’s proposal is that we have correctly identified a character virtue when we have identified an aspect of goodness, and that we need no further criterion to explain what makes the goodness of fulfilling an \textit{obligation} distinct. But while every theory of enumeration needs to regard some consideration as basic in this sense, it is unclear in respect to the \textit{Desire+Circumstance Criterion} whether circumstances by themselves can serve as such basic considerations insofar as certain circumstances appear to be irrelevant to an analysis of virtue. A trivial example in this regard is that we do not need different virtues for acting during the day and at night since the time of day is irrelevant to the enumeration of the virtues.

In order for Deslauriers’ proposal to provide something close to a traditional list of virtues, we need a further account of what the relevant circumstances are. The \textit{Desire+Circumstance Criterion} either permits the number of character virtues to proliferate seemingly without end, or relies upon the idea of relevant circumstances while providing no account of relevant differences in circumstances.

I.4.2 Virtuous reasons

Russell has suggested that reasons for action enable us to construct a criterion that preserves the attractive features of the \textit{Desire+Circumstance Criterion} while avoiding the problems associated with it. His approach thus resides upon regarding distinct reasons for action as comprising the criterion for enumeration.\textsuperscript{129} Russell argues in this vein that the type of reasons that enumerate the virtues are what he terms virtuous reasons, which are “the sorts of considerations for which persons with that virtue characteristically take themselves to be called into action.”\textsuperscript{130} This view turns upon the idea that there is an array of reasons which share certain similarities that a virtuous person takes to be reasons for action. This would then permit us to claim that there are distinct types of reasons, and that accounting for the categories of reasons that exist makes it possible to account for the character virtues that exist. For

\textsuperscript{128} It is possible for there to be an extraordinary circumstance in which one cannot fulfill that obligation, all things considered, such as when someone plans to hurt others with what has been lent. For an overview of the medieval discussion of these types of cases, see Dougherty, \textit{Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought}.

\textsuperscript{129} Russell, \textit{Practical Intelligence and the Virtues}, chap. 2.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 183.
example, if we can identify an appropriate set of reasons for action, they can
serve as a criterion for distinguishing courage as a distinct virtue.

Russell provides the following examples of such reasons for action:\footnote{The examples are taken from Hursthouse, “The Virtuous Agent’s Reasons.”}

for justice, we can imagine such reasons as ‘It’s his’, ‘I owe it to her’, ‘She has
the right to decide’, ‘That would mean breaking my promise’; for generosity,
‘He needed help’, ‘He asked me for it’, ‘It was his 21st birthday’, ‘She’ll be so
pleased’; for temperance, ‘I’m driving’, ‘I’d like you to have some’, ‘You need
it more than I do’, ‘The cheaper one’s fine by me’; for courage, ‘I could
probably save him if I climbed up there’, ‘Someone had to volunteer’, ‘One
can’t give in to tyrants’, ‘They’ll suffer if I don’t get to them’.\footnote{Russell, \textit{Practical Intelligence and the Virtues}, 183–84.}

From this perspective, there are ultimately as many virtues as there are
virtuous types of reasons.

Russell maintains that relevant reasons for action are the \textit{reasons there are},
not simply the \textit{reasons for which} that actually motivated someone to act in a
certain way. A virtuous person is motivated by the \textit{reasons there are}. On this
view, to identify such reasons is also to enumerate the virtues. We can term
this the \textit{Same Reason Criterion}.

The \textit{Same Reason Criterion} faces a challenge that the \textit{Goodness Criterion}
avoids. It leads to counter-intuitive results in certain cases of virtuous action
and it is not clear whether it is able to account for how such standard examples
of character virtues as moderation and courage are in fact distinct virtues. Let
me here explore an example of virtuous actions that the \textit{Goodness Criterion}
provides a better analysis of than the \textit{Same Reason Criterion}.

For example, two people – we can call them Sara and Peter – see a child
drowning. Peter is a poor swimmer, but saves the child even though it involves
a substantial risk to himself. Sara is a trained lifeguard and a very experienced
swimmer, and saves the child without any real danger to herself.\footnote{Peter and Sara see the drowning child independently of each other in two separate situations.} How
should we understand the virtues involved in this situation? Peter appears to
have done something very courageous, but what about Sara? Sara clearly did
the right thing, but did she act courageously? Because the situation involves
little risk for Sara, I think we should say that she did not. Sara and Peter then
appear to have not performed the same virtuous action, even though they
apparently had the same reason for acting, namely, saving a drowning child.
However, this cannot be the case according to the \textit{Same Reason Criterion},
which maintains that it is the reason for action that distinguishes between
specific character virtues and virtuous actions. The claim is that if the reason
for action is the same, then the virtuous action must also be the same.

Proponents of the \textit{Same Reason Criterion} have two options in this respect:
(1) Sara did indeed act courageously, even if there was no risk to her own

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Reasons there are}: It’s his, I owe it to her, She has
the right to decide, That would mean breaking my promise,
He needed help, He asked me for it, It was his 21st birthday, She’ll be so
pleased.
\item \textit{Reasons for which}: I’m driving, I’d like you to have some, You need
it more than I do, The cheaper one’s fine by me.
\item \textit{Reasons for action}: It’s his, I owe it to her, She has
the right to decide, That would mean breaking my promise,
He needed help, He asked me for it, It was his 21st birthday, She’ll be so
pleased.
\end{itemize}
safety in the situation, or (2) Sara and Peter did not in fact have the same reason for acting. I think that that both of options are unattractive. For example, what makes Peter’s action courageous is that he overcame a perceived serious risk to his own well-being in order to act on the reasons there were. Courageous action must involve some level of risk taking, which I take to be the main reason why Aristotle, among others, maintains that the actions of a soldier are paradigmatic examples of courage because of the extreme and unavoidable risks involved in warfare. The fact that saving the child involved no real risk to Sara thus speaks against her acting courageously.

What about the second option? Both Sara and Peter would then have acted in order to save the child not by some external motive, but because they could not let the child drown if they could prevent it. However, is there a difference between their reasons for acting? Russell claims that “the sameness of reasons is the sameness of the content of reasons,”\(^{134}\) which implies that if Peter acted courageously and Sara did not, then there would have to be a difference in the content of their reasons for acting in this situation. But we need not assume, for example, that Sara does not believe that children should be saved even if it involves great risk. We can also assume that Peter and Sara have identical moral beliefs, and that they recognize the same features of the situation as comprising a reason for action. What motivation could we then have to deny that Sara and Peter had the same reason for action, with the same content, and that they were motivated by that reason?

The problem with the *Same Reason Criterion* from my perspective is that it forces us to account for any differences in virtue by reference to the content of the reasons there are to act. The case of the drowning child would then be indicative of a larger problem for the *Same Reason Criterion*. Are there courageous reasons with inherently distinct content, or are what may be termed courageous reasons merely the type of reasons upon which a virtuous person acts when in danger? The latter would explain why acting on the same reason does not necessarily entail that Sara and Peter performed the same virtuous action. But if this is correct, then the *Same Reason Criterion* would imply that courage is not a virtue because we cannot identify a set of reasons that are unique to courage in terms of their content.

This problem appears to be generalizable to other virtues as well, such as moderation. Is there really any commonality in the content of the reasons for which moderate people act? Is there really such a thing as a set of moderate reasons with a specific content? Russel argues that “I’d like you to have some” is a moderate reason for action. Imagine a situation, however, in which a person who hates the taste of chocolate cake is offered a piece and answers “I’m fine, but I’d like you to have some.” I take this to not be an act of moderation, and “I’d like you to have some” would then be involved in moderate actions only in certain situations. If we cannot find a commonality

\(^{134}\) Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*, 193.
in the reasons for which virtuous people act in terms of moderation, then moderation is not a distinct virtue. Having to reevaluate what we previously believed to be a virtuous act because we explicitly adopted a criterion for enumeration is not a problem in itself since one motivation for adopting a criterion was to evaluate what we believed to be virtues. But a given criterion is called into question when it struggles with explaining why courage and moderation are typically regarded – and I believe for good reason – as paradigmatic character virtues.

Aquinas’s approach avoids such problems. From his perspective, the difference between Sara and Peter resides not upon their reasons for action (and their content), but rather upon what Peter had to overcome in order to act upon the reason there was in this situation. Peter showed firmness in the face of danger, while Sara did not. Sara might very well have a courageous character, but her action in this situation did not display it. Aquinas would say that Peter’s actions have a likeness to his character, but we cannot say the same about Sara, even if she did the right thing for the right reason.\footnote{ST II. II. 124. 7c. This passage will play a central role in my discussion of virtuous action in the next chapter.}

Courage is something that helps us live in accordance with reason, but that does not entail that there is a set of reasons which are unique to courageous actions. Aquinas’s account does not require that we assume there are specific virtuous reasons with a specific types of content, but rather focuses on what virtue helps us to do. A person who hates chocolate cake does not need moderation in order to offer someone a piece of cake. Aquinas’s position is that moderation is a specific virtue because it helps us restrain the desire for actual pleasure. This is supported by taking into consideration what we would say if a person failed to offer someone a piece of cake – we would not say that he acted immoderately, but rather that he acted spitefully, for instance. The reasons why we should not follow what gives us the most physical pleasure can be many and various, and we should call someone who does not overindulge in food moderate. But that does not mean that they necessarily do so for the same reason in all cases. Furthermore, the reasons upon which they act need not be unique to moderate action.

The general problem with the list of reasons Russell provides is that it is easy to imagine a circumstance in which acting on any given reason will not lead to a virtuous action of the associated type. I take this as indicating that a reason for action (with a specific content) does not play a foundational role in the enumeration of the virtues. We have seen above that Aquinas’s approach involves us having to take such concepts as firmness and restraint as basic moral concepts, but I maintain that this is preferable to a criterion that struggles to explain why courage and moderation are paradigmatic character virtues.
Although the *Goodness Criterion* avoids the problems associated with the *Same Reason Criterion*, it raises the question of what makes a given action a virtuous action. I will seek to answer this challenge in the following chapter. I maintain that Aquinas endorses the traditional view that virtuous actions are actions that stem from a virtuous character, which may be referred to as dispositionalism. Virtuous actions would then depend on a virtuous disposition, and not the converse, which is to say that they need to be an expression of an actual virtuous character. Aquinas’s analysis of the aspect of goodness helps him to develop such a conception. I ascribe to Aquinas the view that virtuous action is an expression of a virtuous character if it possesses a certain likeness to the latter in terms of the aspects of goodness discussed above.

**I.5 Conclusion**

I have argued in this chapter that Aquinas developed a criterion for the systematic enumeration of the virtues. He needs such a criterion for enumeration because he is faced with divergent uses in his tradition of terms concerning virtue. From his viewpoint, two character virtues are distinct if there is a difference between the aspects of goodness they concern. While Aquinas is committed to a large array of character virtues — more than the number provided by Aristotle — they do not proliferate without end. In addition, enumerating the character virtues is a normative enterprise that may rely to some extent upon a correct understanding of human psychology, it is not reducible to the latter. I have also explored certain advantages that Aquinas’s approach enjoys over recently proposed alternatives that focus on circumstances and reasons for actions. The discussion has further emphasized the role of goodness in understanding what virtues there are.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that Aquinas’s account of the distinctness of virtue is an important topic in its own right. However, this account is important to the dissertation as a whole. Aquinas’s notion of goodness lies at the heart of his discussion of virtuous actions (Chapter II) as well as his discussion of the connection of the character virtues (Chapter III). The *Goodness Criterion* is also central to the discussion of the cardinal virtues in Chapter IV. In addition, Godfrey’s discussion of the connection of the character virtues (Chapter V) is intended to preserve Aquinas’s account of their plurality.
Chapter II: Virtuous action, likeness, and dispositionalism

Introduction

What makes an action virtuous? We might at least initially think that virtuous actions are actions that originate from a virtuous character, an idea we will refer to as dispositionalism. A dispositionalist maintains that virtuous states possess a certain explanatory priority over virtuous actions. Aquinas’s own account of virtuous action is often described in dispositionalist terms, and he is thus usually regarded as a follower of Aristotle on this issue. Aquinas’s Aristotelian view is contrasted in this respect with that of John Duns Scotus, who rejected the view that virtuous character plays any part in explaining what makes good actions good. However, the details of Aquinas’s view, particularly why he is a dispositionalist, have received less attention. This chapter seeks to address this shortcoming in the literature, and its two main aims are (1) to establish that Aquinas is indeed a dispositionalist, as well as the type of dispositionalist he is, and (2) to provide an answer for why Aquinas maintains that virtuous actions stemming from virtue are better than any other types of action. The Goodness Criterion, which was explored in the previous chapter, will help us understand Aquinas’s position. I argue that we should ascribe to Aquinas the view that an action is virtuous and fully good only if it has a likeness to the person’s own good character in terms of a specific aspect of goodness.

This chapter also plays a central role in the dissertation as a whole because it highlights the relation between Aquinas’s discussion of how to enumerate the virtues with his analysis of how the virtues are connected. I will argue in the next chapter that Aquinas relies upon a specific form of dispositionalism to support his argument concerning how the virtues are connected.

The present chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first I defend a dispositionalist reading of Aquinas, while in the second I explore what

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136 I here follow Thomas Hurka in his use of the term in “Virtuous Act, Virtuous Dispositions.”
138 See Horner, “Is Aquinas an Act-Ethicist or an Agent-Ethicist?” Horner addresses a larger question than I do in the present discussion insofar as he seeks to know what the primary object of moral evaluation is. He argues that Aquinas’s ethical theory should provide an account of both but he affirms that Aquinas is a dispositionalist in the sense discussed here.
makes action performed from virtue better than other good actions. Finally, I develop certain ways in which Aquinas could respond to a recent objection to dispositionalism.

II.1 What makes an action a virtuous action?

The discussion concerning dispositionalism comprises a dispute over whether an action or the related character state has explanatory priority. Is it the character state that makes a given action virtuous, or are character states dispositions that merely tend to lead to virtuous actions? The locus classicus of dispositionalism is Aristotle’s discussion of the conditions for virtuous action in Book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,139 where the third condition mentioned is that actions are virtuous only if they are performed from a virtuous character. Aristotle further states that actions are not virtuous if they do not proceed from “a firm and unchanging character” (*NE* 1105a33). Gopal Sreenivasan has recently presented two different interpretations of dispositionalism, namely, the epistemic and metaphysical views.140 The epistemic view maintains that virtuous actions are most easily identified by reference to virtuous character states, that is, we come to know which actions are virtuous by examining the character states from which they are performed. However, character plays no role from this perspective in making specific actions virtuous. In contrast, the metaphysical interpretation asserts that what makes an action virtuous, at least in part, is that it proceeds from a virtuous character. Since it is the metaphysical version of dispositionalism that will be our concern below,141 I will subsequently refer to metaphysical dispositionalism simply as dispositionalism.

The example of how generosity can be understood as a virtue illustrates the contrast between dispositionalist and non-dispositionalist views. A non-dispositionalist argues that "generous people are being generous only derivatively, in the sense that they are prone to performing generous acts," whereby generosity as a character state or disposition is constituted merely as

139 Given that Aquinas often relies upon Aristotle in respect to ethics, one might conclude that Aquinas must be a dispositionalist. However, scholarship in recent decades has shown that Aquinas does not merely follow Aristotle in ethical matters.


141 There is a further question if Aquinas is an epistemic dispositionalist. Aquinas thinks in general that we come to know our dispositions by understanding our acts (*I Sent.* 17.1.4; *III Sent.* 23.1.2; *QDV* 10.9). For a discussion of these passages, see Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur*, 35–144). This general consideration would support that Aquinas is not an epistemic dispositionalist. There might be certain tension between metaphysical dispositionalism and epistemic non-dispositionalism. How can we know that a virtuous act is a sign of a disposition if we do not already have some principle to determine if an act is virtuous in the first place (independently of the disposition in question)? In this chapter I will not address this problem.
a "proneness to performing generous acts." A generous action is therefore prior in terms of explanation to the disposition from which it originates. For a non-dispositionalist, in so far as virtues are invoked they do not explain an action being virtuous. Instead, dispositions at most explain the frequency or the likelihood of certain acts to occur. The fact that an act is virtuous has nothing to do with the disposition from which it originates. That the act is virtuous is explained by other means. Virtues are instead viewed as dispositions that lead to some specific types of action. They play no role in making certain actions generous. However, insofar as Aquinas is a dispositionalist, he holds the opposing view that a virtuous dispositional state, at least in part, is what makes virtuous actions virtuous

II.1.1 Dispositions and the good
The clearest formulation of dispositionalism in Aquinas is found in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he writes “so that actions be justly and moderately performed, it is not enough that the things done be good, but it is required that the actions are done properly” (*InEthic* 2.4.4). For this reason, Aquinas maintains that an element of what is entailed in acting properly is that one acts from a stable character state. He further remarks in elaborating upon Aristotle’s idea that “virtue makes us and our actions good” that “Because a perfect operation proceeds only from a perfect agent, it follows that anything is both good and operates well according to virtue” (*InEthic* 2.3.6). Aquinas thereby ascribes to Aristotle the view that one cannot perform a perfect action without possessing the corresponding character state. It is important to note that Aquinas affirms that actions of non-virtuous people can be called virtuous insofar that they are similar to actions of virtuous people, stating that Aristotle argues that “things done are called just and moderate because they are similar to the things that a just and moderate man does” (*InEthic* 2.4.6). That is to say that an action performed by a person who does not possess virtue is virtuous only in the sense that it is similar to an action performed by a virtuous agent. Aquinas further argues that Aristotle maintains that actions “are perfections of the agents. Therefore, the good of these actions corresponds to the agents themselves” (*InEthic* 2.4.3). This is a clear expression of the dispositionalist sentiment, whereby a person

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143 Et ideo dicit, quod ad hoc quod aliqua fiant iuste vel temperate, non sufficit, quod opera quae fiunt bene se habeant; sed requiritur, quod operans debito modo operetur.
144 Et quia perfecta operatio non procedit nisi a perfecto agente, consequens est, quod secundum virtutem proprietiam unaqueaque res et bona sit, et bene operetur.
145 ...dicuntur iustae et temperatae quando sunt similis illis quas iustus et temperatus operatur.
146 ...unde tales actiones sunt perfectiones agentium. Et ideo bonum harum actionum in ipsis agentibus consistit.
is good if they possess virtue and the goodness of their actions depends upon their goodness of character.

But does Aquinas himself endorse the position he ascribes to Aristotle? He does not always do so, and we cannot take it for granted that Aquinas endorses the dispositionalist view that he ascribes to Aristotle. As we have seen, Aquinas is quite attracted to Aristotle’s dictum “virtue makes us and our actions good” and uses it consistently throughout his ethics. This has led many scholars to view Aquinas as a dispositionalist. David A. Horner, for example, describes Aquinas’s view by stating that:

> What one does, how one feels (i.e., how one responds) – one’s “action,” in Aquinas’s broader sense – expresses who one is, one’s nature or character. Action expresses agency.

Aquinas is also often contrasted with Dun Scotus, whose analysis is regarded as comprising a break with this central feature of Aristotelian ethics insofar as he is taken as giving no role to virtuous dispositions in making actions good.

However, the contrast between Aquinas and Scotus on this issue has recently been challenged by Thomas Osborne, who claims that Aquinas directly contradicts the thesis that virtue is necessary for moral goodness by stating that virtue is not important for the substance of the act but for the way in which the act is performed.

Osborne thus wishes to avoid ascribing to Aquinas the view that only virtuous people can do good actions. His main reason for rejecting what we may term strong dispositionalism concerning good actions is that Aquinas himself has a lengthy discussion of what makes an action good. I agree with Osborne that if, for example, a person with a vicious character returns what they have borrowed for the right reason, and in what Aquinas refers to as the right circumstance, then they do something that Aquinas would call a good action. But I do not think that Aquinas would call such actions completely good. This

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147 See, for example, Kent, “Dispositions and Moral Fallibility.”
148 ... virtus est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus ejus bonum reddit.
149 For example, see QDVert. 1.12; 2.2; ST I.II.56.3; II.II.47.4c; II.II, 58.3c; II.II.123.1c.
150 For a general account that emphasizes the need of virtue for good actions, see Shields and Pasnau, The Philosophy of Aquinas, 286–88.
151 Horner, “Is Aquinas an Act-Ethicist or an Agent-Ethicist?,” 265.
152 Osborne directs attention to the curious fact that, in the discussion following Scotus and Aquinas, Scotus is viewed as upholding the strong thesis, in contrast to Aquinas, that virtue is the only thing that can make action good (Human Action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus & William of Ockham, 196). This stands in sharp contrast to how contemporary scholarship understands Scotus’s view.
154 Ibid., 197.
155 ST I.II.18–21 For a general discussion of this theory, see Pilsner, The Specification of Human Actions in St Thomas Aquinas.
does not settle the question of how we should understand both Aquinas’s possible dispositionalism in general and the contrast with Scotus. The problem is that the fact that actions can be good independently of virtue does not rule out the possibility that virtue can contribute further goodness to our acts. We have seen that Aquinas attributes to Aristotle the idea that perfect actions require a perfect agent. Aquinas might still believe that such actions depend on a virtuous character, and that such actions deserve to be called virtuous actions for this very reason. Against this background, two issues need to be resolved in order to determine what view Aquinas holds: (1) Are there at least some actions that Aquinas would call virtuous because they stem from dispositional states? (2) Are such actions better or more perfect than similar actions performed non-virtuous people, that is, do virtuous dispositions contribute to the goodness of actions? I argue that Aquinas would answer yes to both of these questions, and that this should be regarded as a form of dispositionalism. This raises a further question concerning the reason(s) Aquinas presents for maintaining that actions done from virtue are indeed better than other actions.

II.1.2 Two kinds of virtuous action

Aquinas discusses virtuous action in a number of texts. In Disputed Questions on the Virtues, for example, he raises the objection that virtue cannot be acquired by action because a given action is either virtuous or vicious, and in neither case can it cause virtue since both presuppose that we already possess virtue. He answers the objection in the following way:

Virtue is generated by actions which are virtuous in one sense and not in another. The actions that occur before virtue are virtuous from the point of view of what is done insofar as the person is doing just or brave things. They are not virtuous from the point of view of how it is done; because before someone has acquired the disposition of a virtue, a human being does not do virtuous actions in the way that a virtuous person does them, that is, readily, without any hesitation, with pleasure, and without difficulty (QDVirt. 1.9.ad13).

Aquinas focuses in this statement on the difference between what is done (such as returning what has been borrowed) and how it is done (without

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156 I take it that Aquinas considers this to be the same objection that Aristotle himself discusses in NE 2.4.

157 ...virtus generatur ex actibus quodammodo virtuosis et quodammodo non virtuosis. Actus enim praeecedentes virtutem, sunt quidem virtuosi quantum ad id quod agitur, in quantum scilicet homo agit fortia et iusta; non autem quantum ad modum agendi: quia ante habitum virtutis acquisitum non agit homo opera virtutis eo modo quo virtuosus agit, scilicet prompte absque dubitatione et delectabiliter absque difficultate.
hesitation, with pleasure, and without difficulty). and he maintains that the first type of virtuous actions are not performed in the way a virtuous person would. He states that “No man can act as a virtuous man acts unless he has a virtuous state, as the Philosopher explains (NE 2.4; 5.8)” (ST I.II.100.9sc).

Aquinas remarks in his early Commentary on the Sentences that we can speak about good actions in two ways – either we speak about a good action as something prior to virtue that is the cause of virtue, or we speak of it as that which “proceeds from a virtue and is shaped by it” (II Sent 28.1.1.ad5; see also II Sent 28.1.3.ad2). He further states that “An act is good not only from the good that is done, but also from how it is done, as is clear in the case of the character virtues” (III Sent. 23.2.3.3c). Two issues should be noted here. First, Aquinas makes it clear that there is difference in goodness between these two types of actions; second, virtuous action in the second sense is shaped by virtuous character, whereby acting from a virtuous disposition makes a difference in respect to the action performed. Stated briefly, the relevant remarks in Summa Theologiae and the Commentary on the Sentences together form a coherent picture, such that there are two differences between these two types of actions. The one is good because of what is done, such as returning what has been borrowed, and such actions cause us to gain virtue. The second type, which are informed by the virtue from which they originate, are not good merely because of what is done, but also because of how they are done.

We can distinguish between these two types of actions in following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two types of virtuous action:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Virtuous actions are good because of what is done, and they cause virtue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Virtuous actions are good because of what is done and of how it is done, and they are informed by the state from which they originate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we understand the distinction in this way, we have good reason to think that Aquinas accepts that virtuous character adds something to good actions, whereby there would be a qualitative difference between the two types of actions. The character virtues would therefore make a difference to the goodness of actions, and this should be regarded as a form of dispositionalism insofar as the second type of virtuous actions depend upon virtuous character.

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158 ST I.II.100.9. Aquinas argues in this passage that possessing virtue is not prescribed by divine and natural law because following the law should make us virtuous. If being virtuous was prescribed by the law, then one would be punished for not being virtuous. There would be no way to follow the law for a non-virtuous person to become virtuous.

159 ...nullus potest operari eo modo quo operatur virtuosus, nisi habeat habitum virtutis; ut patet per philosophum, in II et V Ethic.

160 ...a virtute procedens, ea informatum.

161 ...actus sit bonus non solum ex eo quod bonum est quod fit, sed eo quod bene fit, sicut patet in virtutibus moralibus.
Consequently, a virtuous disposition not only makes it easier to perform good actions, but actions shaped by virtue are also better.

This leads us to the question noted earlier, namely, what reason does Aquinas have to think that such actions are in fact better?

### II.2 Likeness and goodness

Why are virtuous actions shaped by a virtuous character better than those which are not? I propose that Aquinas believes that a virtuous person recognizes themselves in their good actions in a way that a non-virtuous person cannot when performing good actions or acting well. Actions performed from virtue are then in a certain sense like the person doing them. In *ST II.II.123.7*, Aquinas asks whether the brave man acts for the sake of the good of his state of character, and in replying he makes explicit a point that informs much of his discussion of virtue. He argues, for example, that a virtuous person acts in this manner because a virtuous activity is what he terms the proximate end of the agent, whereby the aim of a virtuous action is to produce a likeness in action of one’s character state. Aquinas thus maintains that we should think of virtuous action as similar to how fire and a builder impart a certain likeness onto matter. He states that

An end is twofold, proximate and ultimate. Now the proximate end of every agent is to introduce a likeness of that agent’s form into something else, as the end of fire in heating is to introduce the likeness of its heat into some passive matter, and the end of the builder is to introduce into the matter the likeness of his art. Whatever good follows from this, if it is intended, may be called the remote end of the agent (*ST II.II.123.7c*).

What does this idea entail? Aquinas argues that if one aims to build a house, the proximate end is to impart a particular form onto matter, and whatever good that subsequently follows should be regarded as the remote end. While the remote end for a professional builder might be to make money, the proximate end is to impart his knowledge of building onto the matter, that is, to build a well-functioning house. Aquinas adds that

Now just as in things made, external matter is fashioned by art, so in things done, human deeds are fashioned by prudence. Accordingly, we must conclude that the courageous man intends as his proximate end to express in action a

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162 *ST II.II.123.7c.*

163 *…quod duplex est finis, scilicet proximus, et ultimus. Finis autem proximus uniuscuiusque agentis est ut similitudinem suae formae in alterum inducat, sicut finis ignis calefacientis est ut inducat similitudinem sui caloris in paciente, et finis aedificadoris est ut inducat similitudinem suae artis in materia. Quodcumque autem bonum ex hoc sequitur, si sit intentum, potest dici finis remotus agentis.*

53
likeness of his state of character, for he intends to act in agreement with it. The remote end is happiness, or God (ST II.123.7c).\textsuperscript{164}

That is to say that a prudent and virtuous person aims to express a certain likeness (\textit{similitudo}) of their character in action, and the same is the case with courageous people as well – this is what Aquinas terms the proximate end of action. The good that follows from acting virtuously is the remote end (\textit{finis remotus agentis}), which in respect to virtuous action is happiness. Aquinas therefore believes that we are happy when we are acting virtuously.\textsuperscript{165}

Aquinas here ascribes a certain direction to how the explanation proceeds, that is, it is the form of the character virtue that is imparted to action, not the reverse. One needs a character state to act virtuously in order to impart the likeness of one’s character onto one’s action. Of what does such a likeness consist?

It is at this venture that the aspect of the good explored in the previous chapter, such as the aspect of courage as firmness (\textit{firmitas}) in the face of danger,\textsuperscript{166} plays an important role. From this perspective, Aquinas’s view is that that the proximate end for such a person is to impart that firmness onto their actions. This is what acting in agreement with one’s character entails, such as how a soldier aiming to defend the city expresses in action his firmness of character in the face of danger. Aquinas thereby links the idea of the proximate end of virtuous action with the notion of the aspect of goodness explored in the previous chapter, stating that “the proximate end of any virtue is the good that is done by means of it, which provides their various definitions” (\textit{QDVirt} 1.12.ad1).\textsuperscript{167} He thereby holds the following view:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Likeness:}

An action is perfectly good only if it possesses a likeness to the person’s own character in terms of a specific aspect of goodness.
\end{center}

Aquinas invokes the idea that an action can be similar to the person who performs it in a number of discussions. For example, he provides the following analysis of a person with a vicious character:

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{164} Sicut autem in factibilibus materia exterior disponitur per artem, ita etiam in agibilibus per prudentiam disponuntur actus humani. Sic ergo dicendum est quod fortis sicut finem proximum intendit ut similitudinem sui habitus exprimat in actu, intendit enim agere secundum conveniuntiam sui habitus. Finis autem remotus est beatitudo, vel Deus.

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{QDVirt.} 1.1ad4; ST I.II.5.5; ST I.II.5.6. For a discussion of the role of virtue in happiness, see Stenberg, “Entirely Necessary, but Not a Part.”

\textsuperscript{166} See De Young, “Power Made Perfect in Weakness,” for an excellent analysis of Aquinas’s discussion of courage.

\textsuperscript{167} Nam finis proximus unuscuiusque virtutis est bonum quod ipsa operatur, quod differt ratione.
\end{footnotesize}
a human being has a corrupt tendency inclining him to evil, so that, in respect to that tendency, some evil is, as it were, fitting and similar to the human being; and to this thing, by reason of its fittingness, the will tends as to something good, because everything tends of its own accord to that which is fitting to it (ST I.II 78.3c; see also ST II.II 94.3ad3).168

One element of having a character, whether good or bad, is that certain things seem fitting to it, and Aquinas observes that an inmoderate person’s actions are thus similar (simile) in a certain sense to who they are.169 They indeed experience every indulgent or pleasurable thing as fitting to their character. In general, Aquinas maintains that there is a close connection between what appears as fitting to someone and the given character that they possess, arguing that a person regards “what is fitting to him in respect to that state” (ST II.II.1.4ad3).170

This sort of connection between action and state is directly connected to Aquinas’s analysis of why the second type of virtuous actions are, in the end, pleasant to virtuous people. Aquinas believes that virtuous people feel pleasure in performing virtuous deeds because they experience their own actions as fitting to their character and, as he states, “fittingness is the cause of pleasure” (QDVirt. 1.1c).171 Actions that are like a given person in a certain sense are viewed by that person as fitting and pleasurable to do, and this is equally true for both vicious and virtuous people. A moderate person will regard the restraint of emotions as fitting and ultimately pleasurable,172 while an immoderate person not only seeks pleasure, but regards an unrestrained search for pleasure as pleasurable in itself. Part of what is entailed for an action to be virtuous or vicious is that it is experienced as fitting by the person who performs it.

Aquinas’s view appears to make the greatest sense if we assume that he views actions as possessing a certain reflexive aspect. This would account for why virtuous people, when performing virtuous deeds, experience such deeds as the type of actions that a virtuous person like them takes pleasure in doing. A brave person will experience defending one’s community as just the kind of thing a person like them does. This does not mean that the action itself is not strenuous and does not involve hardship, but rather that it is also pleasurable thing to do because it is experienced as a fitting thing to do.173 It

168 …homo habet aliquam dispositionem corruptam inclinan tem ad malum, ita quod secundum illam dispositionem fit homini quasi conveniens et simile aliquod malum, et in hoc, ratione convenientiae, tendit voluntas quasi in bonum, quia unumquodque secundum se tendit in id quod sibi est conveniens.
169 For a detailed discussion of Aquinas’s account of sin and wrongdoing, see McCluskey, Thomas Aquinas on Moral Wrongdoing.
170 …homo videt illud quod est sibi conveniens secundum habitum illum.
171 Nam convenientia est delectationis causa. …
172 This is also true when the virtuous action involves a certain amount of pain, such as in the case of many courageous actions (ST II.II.123.8c).
173 It is a virtuous action in the sense that it will be part of the good and happy life.
is experienced as the kind of thing people like themselves do, which renders a virtuous action of the second type different from any other good action. Possessing virtue thus not only makes it easier and more likely that we do good actions, but also allow us to experience our own good actions in a different and pleasant way.

I have focused to this point in the discussion primarily on the difference between actions that make us virtuous and actions that are expressions of virtue. It should be noted that the type of dispositionalism I have explored is also an element of Aquinas’s conception of infused virtues. For example, when Aquinas discusses charity, he asks whether a person who possesses charity can sin. He replies that the answer is yes, but immediately qualifies his claim, arguing that it is not possible to do so “with the power of charity” (QDVirt. 2.12c). From this perspective, possessing a good character is not simply reducible to some tendency to perform a given type of action, for a good character is something with which one can act in agreement. That is to say that a person will not sin as long as they follow what the infused character prompts them to do. While Aquinas recognizes that a person who possesses infused virtues can sin, he also maintains that they are then acting out of character – they are not acting in agreement with their own character and with what is suitable or fitting to it. As long as a person chooses to act in agreement with charity and with the infused virtues that follow upon charity, they will remain virtuous.

But Aquinas also acknowledges that a person can fail to act in agreement with charity due to the weakness of their subject and, through their action, lose charity. He argues in this respect that

However, it can sometimes happen that something can appear in a certain way to someone not according to the inclination of his disposition, but differently according to something else. For example, the pleasures of the flesh might seem good to someone who is lustful according to the inclination of his own disposition, but might seem bad to the same person according to rational reflection or the authority of scripture. For this reason, someone who possesses the disposition of lustfulness at times acts in a way contrary to lust by evaluating something in this manner. Conversely, someone who possesses a virtuous disposition at times acts against the inclination of his own disposition when something appears differently to him in some other way, such as through some emotion or other temptation (QDVirt. 2.12). 

174 ...secundum potestatem ipsius caritatis.
175 Contingit tamen quandoque, quod id quod videtur alieui secundum inclinationem habitus, non videatur ei secundum aliquid aliud; sicut luxurioso secundum inclinationem proprie habitus videtur bonum deflectatio carnis, sed secundum rationis deliberationem, vel auctoritatem Scripturae, videtur ei contrarium; et ideo habens habitum luxuriae, ex hac aestimatione contra habitum quandoque agit, et similiter habens habitum virtutis quandoque agit contra inclinationem proprie habitus; quia aliquid ei aliter videtur secundum aliquem alium modum, puta per passionem, vel aliquam seductionem.
It is noteworthy that this entire analysis relies upon the idea having a disposition that is directly associated with certain actions that are fitting to it. Aquinas maintains that dispositional states, by directing us to action, cannot simply be equated with a likelihood of performing a specific action, but instead regards them as states from which we act or as states that we use in action.\textsuperscript{176} As Bonnie Kent has argued, Aquinas does not view a dispositional state as necessitating that one acts virtuously, instead maintaining that virtues may be described as more fragile than Aristotle considered them to be. Nevertheless, Aquinas’s account is still significantly dispositionalist.\textsuperscript{177}

In summary, Aquinas endorses a form of dispositionalism concerning virtuous action, and he argues that a virtuous disposition is the most perfect and best action a human being performs. In the following, section I will briefly address how Aquinas might respond to Thomas Hurka’s recent critique of dispositionalism.

II.3 Dispositionalism and the future

One possible problem with a dispositionalist analysis of virtuous action is that the value of an action apparently depends not only on what a person does, but also on what they will do in the future. If virtues are dispositions, then possessing a virtue disposes one to act in a certain way in the future. But why is what a person will do in future important for the value of what they do in the present? In seeking an answer to this question, Hurka has objected in a recent study that dispositionalism runs contrary to common sense and provides the following example to support his position.

[I]Imagine that your companion stops to give $20 to a homeless person, apparently from concern for that person for her own sake. Do you say ‘That was generous of you,’ or ‘That was generous of you on condition that it issued from a stable disposition to act from similar motives in similar circumstances?’ Again, surely you say the former.\textsuperscript{178}

Hurka may be right in remarking that there is something odd about the claim that the status of an action depends on what the agent would do in similar circumstances in the future. Why does what a person would do in future circumstances matter for an evaluation of the current situation? Why is the value of the current action affected in some way by what we are disposed to do? However, if my interpretation of what Aquinas’s dispositionalism entails

\textsuperscript{176}ST I.II.49.3c.
\textsuperscript{177}That Aquinas moves away from one aspect of Aristotle’s view of virtues (that virtuous character necessitates good actions), but at the same time reaffirms another central tendency of his account (dispositionalism as understood above), is perhaps only to be expected from his eclectic approach to virtue.
\textsuperscript{178}Hurka, “Virtuous Act, Virtuous Dispositions,” 71.
is correct, then what the person would do under other circumstances is not what is relevant for what makes an action virtuous and perfectly good. Although Aquinas would agree that a person without a stable disposition who gives $20 to a homeless person performs a virtuous action of the first type discussed above, he would deny that they perform a virtuous action of the second type. There is a difference between virtuous and non-virtuous persons that is not captured by what will happen in future situations.

The interpretation of Aquinas’s theory of virtue that I have presented indicates that virtues are not merely propensities to perform good actions, but rather ways in which a person is, to which their actions are befitting. Aquinas argues that it is such fittingness, along with the pleasure associated with experiencing an action as fitting one’s character, that renders a given action fully and perfectly good and virtuous. The difference between a virtuous and non-virtuous person resides upon the relation they have to their own actions. As a result, we cannot experience our own good actions as fitting if we do not possess dispositional states that dispose us to act well. A person thus has to be in a certain way in order to experience their own actions as fitting. Although possessing a dispositional state entails that it will be likely that one will act virtuously in future situations, this is not the feature of the dispositional state that renders a given action fully good. Aquinas does not need to deny that a person who does not possess virtue can perform the first type of virtuous action for the right reasons if he seeks to maintain that there is a difference between such actions and the actions of the virtuous person.

I have also argued that there is difference in how the actions in question are experienced. The interpretation I have presented maintains that Aquinas regards virtuous actions as possessing a certain reflectivity, whereby they are experienced as actions that are part of who one is. If this is correct, the difference between Hurka and Aquinas in this regard does not simply involve how we should prioritize between action and character – there is also a central difference concerning what virtue is.

Hurka may be correct in claiming that a common-sense view is contrary to any form of dispositionalism. But Aquinas’s version of dispositionalism does not focus merely on the fact of what a person would do, but rather on how the possession of a stable dispositional state makes a difference for the action a person is currently performing, which is to say that it enables us to experience our action differently. The experience of fittingness is consequently important for how we evaluate our actions. A non-virtuous person may act on the same motive as one who is virtuous, but they cannot experience the action as fitting or as an expression of their own character because they have no such corresponding character. The kind of pleasure felt by a virtuous person in performing virtuous actions is something that cannot be experienced by a non-

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179 As Kent argues, Aquinas maintains only that virtue makes it likely that we will act virtuously in the future (“Dispositions and Moral Fallibility”).
virtuous person performing the same type kind of action for the same motive. From this viewpoint, the second type of virtuous and good actions possess a certain directness and ease that actions not performed from a virtuous disposition cannot possess. Moreover, virtuous actions possess a certain reflexive aspect that is an element of what makes them good. While such observations may not convince a non-dispositionalist, I hope they illustrate part of the appeal of thinking about virtuous actions along dispositionalist lines.

II.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have defended a dispositionalist reading of Aquinas’s account of various good and virtuous actions, whereby he ascribes a certain explanatory priority to dispositions over virtuous actions. Virtuous actions of this type necessarily share a likeness with the person performing them in terms of a certain aspect of goodness. I argue that Aquinas maintains that good actions in which a virtuous person can recognize themselves are the best actions that humans can perform. This turns out to be import for the Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the character virtues. We will discuss in the following chapter why this analysis of virtuous action is central to Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the virtues and for why prudence is in fact dependent upon the character virtues.
Chapter III: Connection and Dependence

Introduction

As we have seen, Aquinas believes both that there are many distinct character virtues, and that they can be enumerated correctly. In order to understand what I have referred to as the structure of the virtues, we need to understand the relations between these distinct character virtues. Aquinas devotes a great deal of attention to how the character virtues are related to each other, and a central issue in his analysis is whether a person can possess one character virtue without possessing the others as well.

Aquinas’s discussion has attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention for two main reasons. First, the connection of the virtues strikes many as counter-intuitive. Why would one think that it is impossible to acquire one character virtue without possessing them all? Many have observed that Aristotle’s own discussion of this matter is limited, and it might be possible that Aquinas provides us with a further argument in this regard. Aquinas should then have a good reason, or at least one that is philosophically interesting, for believing such a seemingly unusual claim. Second, there is a systematic critique of the connection of the character virtues in the generation following Aquinas, accompanied by a clear break with the long and ancient tradition on the question, and scholars have sought to understand how Aquinas’s account relates to this issue.

180 For a broad overview of the medieval discussion on this issue, see Kent, “Aristotle and the Franciscans”; Wood, Ockham on the Virtues, 40–59.
181 Aquinas discusses how the character virtues are connected in III Sent. 36.1.1; ST II.II.65.1; Quodl. 12.14; QDVirt. 5.2. See also ST I.II.58.4–5; InEthic 6.11.13–15. This thesis is often in contemporary philosophy and historic scholarship labeled the unity of the virtues (for example, Badhwar, “The Limited Unity of Virtue.” Cooper, “The Unity of Virtue”) This label is to some extent misleading. The question at hand is not whether virtues are in fact one unified virtue. Medieval thinkers did not discuss relations between virtues under the label of unity (unitas) but under the label of connection (connexa). Further, I will in this chapter also address if prudence is one virtue. I want to reserve the term “unity” to the question of whether prudence is a single and a unified virtue.
183 Olivi, Scotus, and Ockham argue in great detail that the character virtues cannot be connected in this way. For an overview of this discussion, see Wood, Ockham on the Virtues, 51–
We find two main strategies in accounts of how Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the virtues is supposed to work and, consequently, for how we should understand the relation between Aquinas and the following critique.\(^\text{184}\) (1) Porter argues that we should seek an explanation in Aquinas’s account of the human soul, whereby he would believe in the connection of the virtues because he believes in a unified soul.\(^\text{185}\) (2) Irwin argues that the connection of the virtues is explained by the supposed fact that all the character virtues comprise means towards the final end of happiness.\(^\text{186}\) He thereby argues that “A stronger connexion is their connexion with the common end of human life; the correct conception of this single common end is required for every virtue.”\(^\text{187}\)

I defend a different approach in this chapter, proposing that we should focus directly on the dependence between the character virtues and prudence. All Aquinas would need to do in this respect in order to defend the connection of the virtues is account for that dependence. I argue that Aquinas’s argument on closer inspection relies neither on the soul having a certain unified structure, nor on happiness being the final end, but rather on conceiving of the dependence between prudence and the character virtues as a form of mutually essential dependence.\(^\text{188}\) From this perspective, Aquinas is committed to the position that the character virtues make the ability for rationally informed action (right reason in action) into prudence, and that prudence makes a given disposition for good action into a character virtue.

This approach is faced with two interpretive challenges namely: (1) Is prudence indeed dependent on the character virtues? And (2) Is prudence a unified virtue? The main aim of this chapter is to address these two points.

I will argue that Aquinas has an interesting and well-developed explanation for why prudence is dependent on the character virtues in that he maintains that perfect action must be congruent with, and have a certain likeness to, a virtuous person’s own good character. Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the virtues would then rely on the version of dispositionalism I explored in the previous chapter, which entails that the character virtues are not merely needed to make prudential reasoning easier, but that prudence is dependent

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57. For a detailed discussion of Scotus and Ockham, see Adams “Scotus and Ockham on the Connection of the Virtues.”

184 Kim does not focus on what ultimately explains the connection of the virtues, but is rather concerned with demonstrating that Aquinas’s account does not imply that we cannot acquire character virtues. He argues that Aquinas’s notion of grades of virtue can avoid this problem insofar as we can approach an ideal state of virtue a step at a time. I regard his response to this challenge as successful (Kim, “Progress in the Good”), but I will not address this issue in the present discussion.

185 Kim also endorses this reading (“Thomas Aquinas on the Connection of the Virtues,” n. 32).

186 Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided”, 207–11; The Development of Ethics: Volume 1, 589.

187 Ibid.

188 Aquinas never uses the notion of essential dependence. This reading is inspired by Godfrey, who argues that the relevant form of dependence is essential connection. I will explore Godfrey’s specific approach in greater detail in the following chapter.
upon the character virtues because it ultimately aims to express the virtuous person’s own character in action. On this reading, Aquinas is well prepared to respond to a problem that Elizabeth Telfer raises against Aristotle, according to which Aristotle – and consequently his followers – unjustifiably assumed that prudence depends on the character virtues. She instead argues that it is sufficient for prudence that a person not be misled by their emotions, that is, that they be continent or strong willed. Aquinas’s opposing view is that prudence is in fact actually dependent upon the character virtues.

The second problem for our understanding of Aquinas’s account concerns his reasons for maintaining that prudence is a unified virtue. If there are different types of prudence for every character virtue, then the character virtues cannot be connected through prudence. This question has been recently addressed by Thomas Osborne and Irwin. I argue that neither the claim that prudence concerns life as a whole, nor the claim that prudence directs all the character virtues towards the final end of happiness, can ground the unity of prudence in the relevant sense, and that Aquinas never claims that they do. My alternative interpretation focuses on what Aquinas says about prudence being a unified virtue, a claim for which he provides three distinct arguments. In order to understand the role of these arguments, we should recognize that prudence needs to meet two requirements that are not always properly distinguished if it is to be a unified virtue in the sense referred to here. One is that it must be a single virtue, not just a collection of distinct virtues, which may be termed the singularity requirement. In addition, it must not be possible to acquire prudence by the addition of new parts such that one can possess prudence in respect to what relates to a given virtue, but not another. We can refer to this as the indivisibility requirement.

I maintain that while Aquinas provides arguments for the singularity requirement, he only assumes that the indivisibility requirement holds in the case of prudence because it holds for virtues in general. Aquinas believes that the indivisibility requirement holds for a virtue as long as there is no principle of division. Although this interpretation provides a better understanding of that for which Aquinas in fact argues, it also indicates where the weakness in his general discussion ultimately lies. The problem is that Aquinas’s own account of the distinct aspects of goodness, discussed in Chapter I above, is capable of functioning as such a principle of division.

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189 I do not wish to suggest that Aquinas always follows Aristotle. There are many topics on which he differs from Aristotle, and at times appears to do so intentionally.
190 Telfer, “The Unity of the Moral Virtues.”
191 Agnes Callard argues that this does not comprise an objection to Aristotle’s view since Aristotle never aims to defend anything more than the weaker thesis that if one has a character virtue, one is at least continent (enkratic) in respect regards to all the character virtues (“Enkratēs Phronimos”).
192 Osborne, “Thomas and Scotus on Prudence” and Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided.”
193 I will address how Olivi and Godfrey understand this challenge in the following chapter.
This chapter consists of three main sections. In the first, I develop a framework for understanding Aquinas’s claim that the character virtues are connected. I explore Aquinas’s argument for the connection of the virtues in the second section, while in the third section I address the problem that prudence might not be a unified virtue.

III.1 Connection of the character virtues: a basic framework

The aim of this first section is to develop an interpretive framework for understanding Aquinas’s claims concerning how the character virtues are related to each other. This will serve to clarify what Aquinas argues for and how his view is distinguished from other possible views.

Aquinas follows Aristotle in drawing a distinction between imperfect (imperfecta) and perfect (perfecta) virtue, arguing that we can possess perfect virtue only if we possess all the character virtues. Perfect virtue requires that the various virtues are what Aquinas terms connected (connexae).\textsuperscript{194} It should be noted, however, that medieval philosophers use the term “connection” in a rather technical sense whereby a given thing is not connected to another if the two are merely related in some sense. For Aquinas, X is connected to Y if X cannot exist without Y.\textsuperscript{195} Many things are connected in this sense. To take a contemporary example from the philosophy of mind, we may say that mental states and brain states are connected if we cannot have certain mental states without certain brain states. It then remains to explain the grounds for such connection.\textsuperscript{196}

The case is similar in respect to the theory of virtue insofar as we are exploring whether virtues are connected, and if so, upon what ground. One possible explanation for connection would be that there is in fact no plurality of separate character virtues, but rather that the many terms we have for the virtues refer to one and the same thing.\textsuperscript{197} As we have seen in chapter I, Aquinas is committed to the plurality of the character virtues, and that he aims to preserve it throughout his discussion of virtue. My aim in the present discussion is to explore his claim that the character virtues are connected with each other as distinct virtues, whereby the question becomes whether a person

\textsuperscript{194} QDVirt. 5.2c. Imperfect virtue is what Aristotle refers to as natural virtue. For a general discussion of Aquinas’s conception of natural virtue, see Lindon, “The Significance of the Term Virtus Naturalis.”

\textsuperscript{195} If Y also cannot exist without X, then we may say that X and Y are mutually connected.

\textsuperscript{196} This type of connection would be referred to in contemporary philosophy as a sort of supervenience between brain states and mental states. For a general discussion of such issues, see Leuenberger, “Supervenience in Metaphysics.”

\textsuperscript{197} This is what Socrates famously argued in Plato’s early dialogues. See Brickhouse and Smith, “Socrates and the Unity of the Virtues,” for a discussion of this view.
can possess a given character virtue, such as moderation, without also possessing all the others. This claim is often contrasted with the lack of such connection between the various sciences and skills, such as how one can know biology without knowing physics, or be good at plumbing without being good at carpentry.\footnote{While it might help to know physics if one wishes to learn biology, it is not strictly necessary. In addition, although biological facts may be reducible to physical facts, it does not follow that one needs to know physical facts in order to know biological facts. Similarly, many skills may be transferable, but this does not mean that one cannot acquire a given skill without possessing another. Although one may say that various skills are connected in a loose sense, they are not connected in the strict sense noted above.}

Aquinas acknowledges that one can possess a given character virtue to some extent without possessing all the other character virtues, the issue at hand is whether one can possess a character virtue \textit{perfectly} unless one possesses all the character virtues \textit{perfectly}.\footnote{Kent is the only scholar to my knowledge who denies this (“Dispositions and Moral Fallibility”). She instead argues that Aquinas endorses a specific version of \textit{Strong Local Connection} such that only the cardinal virtues (justice, moderation, courage, and prudence) are connected. I will address this interpretation in the following chapter.} Let us refer to this view as \textit{Strong Global Connection}. On this view, all character virtues are connected and if one has any of them perfectly one has all the other character virtues perfectly. This view is different from what may be termed \textit{Weak Connection} and \textit{Local Connection}. \textit{Weak Connection} is the view that if a person possesses a given virtue perfectly, then they possess the others to some degree. \textit{Local Connection} is the view that a character virtue is only connected with some character virtues but not all. These two distinctions form the following four-fold scheme:

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<th>Global</th>
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<td>\textit{Strong Global Connection}: If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has all the character virtues perfectly.</td>
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<td>\textit{Strong Local Connection}: If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has some character virtues perfectly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>\textit{Weak Global Connection}: If one has a character virtue perfectly one has all character virtues to some degree.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>\textit{Weak Local Connection}: If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has some character virtues to some degree.</td>
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The challenge we are faced with is how to formulate Aquinas’s argument in such a way that his position supports only \textit{Strong Global Connection}.
III.2. Arguments for *Strong Global Connection*

III.2.1 One argument or two?

Aquinas states that there are two arguments for *Strong Global Connection*, the first of which he ascribes to Augustine and Gregory the Great, which we may term the *Patristic Argument*, and the second to Aristotle, which we may term the *Aristotelian Argument*. The former focuses on how we cannot call someone courageous, for example, if they are unjust, whereby so-called courage cannot be true courage if it is used to pursue unjust aims. The latter focuses on the role of prudence in connecting the character virtues.

The problem with the *Patristic Argument* concerns how we should understand its relation to Aquinas’s commitment to distinct virtues. A point of concern is that the way in which Aquinas formulates his argument may not establish the connection of the character virtues as he understands it, but rather a more trivial point. A confusing facet of this discussion is that Aquinas presents two lines of argumentation side by side, stating that “For this, two arguments are given, corresponding to the different ways of assigning the distinction of the cardinal virtues” (*ST* I.II.65.1c). This makes it seem that there are two basic arguments for the same thesis. We saw in the previous chapter that Aquinas regards Augustine and Gregory as using terms for virtue in a broad sense (*large*) such that they do not refer to virtues as character states, but rather to the conditions (*conditiones*) of virtue. Against this background, what does the *Patristic Argument* in fact demonstrate? Does it maintain that virtue taken broadly is connected, or that virtue taken narrowly is connected because of a certain relation between the conditions of virtue? This raises the question of whether there in fact are two distinct arguments for *Strong Global Connection* in Aquinas.

With respect to the *Patristic Argument* and its association with the conditions of virtue, Aquinas states that “strength of mind is not commended as virtuous, if it be without moderation or rectitude or discretion; and so forth” (*ST* I.II.65.1; see also *Quodl.* XII.15). That is to say that these general conditions must be displayed in every virtue, such as when justice taken

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200 *ST* I.II.65.1c.
201 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI.4; Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, XXII.1; Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.12–13.
202 Cuius ratio duplex assignatur, secundum quod diversimode aliqui virtutes cardinales distinguunt.
203 As I argued in Chapter I, taking Augustine’s and Gregory’s uses of terms for virtue as indicating merely conditions for virtue is not an accurate representation of their position. They may instead be regarded as understanding the various virtues not as distinct, but rather as expressions of one overarching virtue.
204 Aquinas also refers to these as modes. For a discussion on this point, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 114, and Houser, *The Cardinal Virtues*, 64–73.
205 …non enim firmitas habet laudem virtutis, si sit sine moderatione, vel rectitudine, aut discretione; et eadem ratio est de aliis.
206 *DQVirt.* 5.1.
broadly refers to the condition that any virtuous act must be right and in accordance with what is due. In this case, “justice” does not refer to a dispositional state (*habitus*), but rather to a condition for virtue without which no state of character is a true virtue.

But when Aquinas’s view is understood in this way, his argument becomes a trivial claim that follows directly from the notion of a condition. For example, in order to be a good teacher, one needs to be both knowledgeable and pedagogical insofar as knowledge is useless if one is not pedagogical and pedagogical skills are in vain when one lacks knowledge. Neither is being knowledgeable advantages if a teacher lacks pedagogical skills, nor is possessing pedagogical skills advantages if a teacher lacks knowledge. This sort of reasoning says nothing about the connection between the knowledge of different subjects – the fact that one knows what is necessary for teaching biology does not imply that they know what is necessary for teaching history. Stated otherwise, if we believe that there are many character virtues, then relations between the conditions for virtue says little about the connection of the character virtues as distinct dispositions.

If this reading is correct, however, then Aquinas has shown nothing more than that we must possess all the conditions for virtue in general in order to possess any given virtue. Failure in respect to a condition regarding justice as a distinct virtue would then not necessarily entail failure in respect to a condition regarding courage as a distinct virtue, for example.207 The basic difficulty with the *Patristic Argument* is that it is based upon a version of the idea that we can describe any virtuous action as just, moderate, prudent, and courageous, at least on some level. This appears to not fit well with Aquinas’s more substantial commitment to distinct character virtues that we explored in Chapter I.

In the end, though, this argument plays a very small role in Aquinas’s detailed discussion of the connection of the virtues in the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*. The fact that he pays little attention to this argument when presenting his most detailed account of connection provides further reason to focus on the *Aristotelian Argument* as Aquinas’s main argument.

Nevertheless, how we understand the role of the *Patristic Argument* affects how we understand Aquinas’s discussion at large. The fact that the Patristic and Aristotelian arguments are presented together has led certain scholars to undertake the effort to develop an account of how they are related. For instance, Jean Porter argues that the claim that the virtues are connected should be understood as a psychological thesis about what is characteristic of the virtuous person’s distinctive way of acting, as well

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207 Albert the Great objects in his *Commentary on the Sentences* that this argument does not work for this very reason (*In III Sententiarum*, 36.1). Given the fact that Aquinas studied with Albert, it is somewhat surprising that he does not address this issue.
Porter thus concludes that the psychological thesis (Patristic) implies that virtues are connected when they are regarded as discrete normative ideals (Aristotelian). But if I am correct in respect to how we should understand the Patristic Argument, the latter cannot serve as the basis for such a general approach, not least because doing so might lead us to misconstrue Aquinas’s argument as a whole.

This indicates that we should not regard the connection of the character virtues as something that follows directly from a psychological commitment concerning the structure of the soul. I instead maintain that Aquinas believes in Strong Global Connection because of a specific commitment concerning how we should evaluate character. The Strong Global Connection would then follow upon a particular analysis of how to evaluate different aspects of being a good human being.

I now turn to what Aquinas himself considers to be an Aristotelian Argument regarding how a specific form of mutual dependence between the character virtues and prudence implies Strong Global Connection.

III.2.2 Inclination and determination

Aquinas’s second argument for Strong Global Connection is based upon Aristotle’s discussion in NE VI.12–13. He develops Aristotle’s fairly brief analysis in greater detail as he undertakes to explain how the unique relationship between prudence and the character virtues implies that all of the character virtues are connected.

Aquinas presents us with a basic model for how possessing a character virtue involves being inclined in a certain way, which entails having certain inclinations towards certain ends. Briefly stated, the character virtues provide us with the basic inclinations from which true prudential reasoning begins, whereby there is a type of dependence between prudence and the character virtues that, in turn, grounds the connection between the character virtues. We can refer to this argument as the Dependence Argument insofar as it aims to establish Strong Global Connection on the basis of the mutual dependence between prudence and the character virtues. This argument may be viewed as consisting of three parts: (1) establishing the dependence of prudence upon the character virtues; (2) establishing the dependence of the character virtues upon prudence; and (3) showing that such mutual

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208 Porter, “The Unity of the Virtues.”
209 Ibid., 154.
210 This specific framework follows neither from the Latin translation of NE VI, nor from Albert the Great’s treatment of the issue.
III.2.3 Prudence depends on the character virtues

Aquinas argues that one cannot possess prudence without possessing the character virtues. Why does one’s ability to reason depend on the type of person one is and on their motivational states? Aquinas follows Aristotle in arguing that the character virtues are necessary for having the right ends, and once we recognize what Aquinas believes is entailed by this idea, his approach appears well-suited for addressing the objection initially formulated by Telfer concerning the Aristotelian approach to the connection of the character virtues. Telfer claims that Aristotle’s argument for connection does not hold because we cannot maintain that practical wisdom generates all the moral virtues; practical wisdom is compatible with the excesses or deficiencies in emotional disposition which mean that a virtue is not yet achieved.

Possessing prudence would then require nothing more than self-control or continence, which would enable a person to be wholly courageous, for example, with perfect prudence, while only being continent in respect to pleasures. This would mean, however, that such a person does not possess moderation insofar as they experience strong desires for physical pleasure, but do not act upon them, instead doing what reason tells them to do.

I take this to be a serious counter-argument against anyone who argues for any form of connection through prudence. However, the integration of prudence with the character virtues in Aquinas’s account goes well beyond the simple need to keep one’s emotions under control. From Aquinas’s perspective, the character virtues are necessary for prudence because virtuous ends need to be upheld through one’s character, which enables a virtuous

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211 For Aquinas’s discussion of this issue, see ST I.II.58.1–5.
212 It appears that Telfer’s challenge has not been addressed by those who maintain that Aristotle believes in some version of the connection of the virtues. Agnes Callard argues that prudence does not in fact imply connection of the character virtues, but rather what she refers to as a good ethical condition in the affective domain that includes both continence and character virtue (“Enkratēs Phronimos”).
214 For Aquinas’s account of incontinence, see Barnwell, “Aquinas’s Two Different Accounts of Akrasia”; Kent, “Transitory Vice”; “Aquinas and Weakness of Will”; Pickavé, “Aquinas on Incontinence”; and Saarinen, Weakness of the Will, 125f.
215 There is also certain value in having correct emotional responses. Telfer’s argument is not that emotional responses do not matter for character virtue, but that possessing character virtue matters little over and above keeping one’s emotions under control for the sake of prudence and one’s ability to reason well.
person to impart a certain likeness of that character in action and act in agreement with one’s character.

III.2.4 Ends of the character virtues
Aquinas maintains that there is a close relationship between virtue and ends such that we need the character virtues in order to possess certain types of ends. He argues in this regard that

prudence is right reason about what can be done. The starting point of prudence is the end of what is to be done, and we are rightly directed to it by character virtue. Therefore, just as we cannot have speculative science unless we have understanding of the principles, so neither can we have prudence without the character virtues (ST I.II.65.1c).

Briefly stated, one needs the character virtues in order to possess prudence because they are necessary for possessing the types of ends that serve as the starting points of deliberation, upon which prudence as an intellectual virtue depends. These ends are similar to principles in theoretical reasoning in the sense that one needs to have the correct starting points in order to reason well, and one can have these starting points only by having a good character.

The central question then concerns why Aquinas maintains that one cannot possess such ends without actually being a good person who possesses a certain type of character and emotional disposition. In order to answer this question, we need to explore the types of ends that Aquinas refers to within this context, and we should first note they are not what he would term universal principles.

Aquinas argues that human beings need something more than principles, namely, the ends of the character virtues. He states in this regard that

Consequently, in the same way as a human being is disposed in regard to the universal principles of what can be done by natural understanding or through a state of science, so too in order for a human being to be rightly disposed with regards to particular principles of what can be done, which are ends, one needs to be perfected by a certain state according to which it becomes connatural in

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216 Similiter etiam prudentia non potest haberi nisi habeantur virtutes morales, cum prudentia sit recta ratio agibilium, quae, sicut ex principiis, procedit ex finibus agibilium, ad quos aliquis recte se habet per virtutes morales. Unde sicut scientia speculativa non potest haberi sine intellectu principiorum, ita nec prudentia sine virtutibus moralibus.

217 For an overview of Aquinas’s discussion concerning ends, see Farrell, The Ends of the Moral Virtues.

218 I here agree with Farrell that we should view synderesis as providing only what may be termed a thin end, namely, to act in accordance with reason (ibid. 120f.). Farrell does not address how actual character states relate to proximate ends.

219 These universal principles are the precepts of natural law that Aquinas famously discusses in ST I.II.94.1–6.
Aquinas is thus committed to the claim that a given judgment about an end follows from having a given character, but there is little consensus among scholars concerning how we should understand the relation between character virtue and ends. It is reasonably clear that Aquinas believes that the character virtues are important for prudence because one would be led by one’s emotions to act contrary to prudence without them. Prudence thus relies upon the character virtues insofar as it is difficult for a person with unruly emotions to reason correctly about what to do. But this by itself does not demonstrate the kind of dependence that Aquinas needs to support the Dependence Argument, only that one needs to be continent and prevent their reasoning from being influenced by their emotions. What we want to know is why having a certain character, such as being a just person, is necessary for having particular ends in life.

Aquinas unambiguously maintains in the Commentary on the Sentences that prudence requires the character virtues in order to avoid two errors entailed by not possessing virtue. He observes that

One error is about the end, as in the case of one having vice, who is inclined to his act as to the good in itself. Such an error is comparable to the error about principles in speculative matters. The second error occurs in the pursuit of the end when someone is led away from a correct conception that he has about the end. It is thus said that pleasure corrupts an estimation of prudence. This error compares with a failure in acting, which in speculation is a failure about reasoning from principles to a conclusion (III Sent. 36.1.1c).

The character virtues are instrumentally important for correct moral reasoning in the sense that the more character virtue one possesses, the easier it will be to reason correctly about what one should do. I take it to be uncontroversial

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220 Et ideo, sicut homo disponitur ad recte se habendum circa principia universalia, per intellectum naturalem vel per habitum sientiae; ita ad hoc quod recte se habeat circa principia particularia agibilium, quae sunt fines, oportet quod perficiatur per aliquos habitus secundum quos fiat quodammodo homini connaturale recte iudicare de fine.

221 For an overview of this debate, see Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles.” Hoffman argues that particular ends are not specific types of ends, but rather ends held in a certain way. When ends are regarded as not only good, but also fitting, they become particular ends. Irwin and Scott McDonald instead argue that particular ends are thicker ends that are attained through deliberation about happiness. See Irwin, “The Scope of Deliberation”; MacDonald, “Foundations in Aquinas’s Ethics.”

222 Unus qui est circa finem, sicut habens habitum vitii, qui quidem inclinat ad suum actum sicut ad per se bonum; et talis error in agendis assimilatur errori qui est circa principia in speculandis. Alius error est in prosecuteione finis, qui contingit cum quis a recta conceptione quam de fine habet, abducitur per passiones; sicut dicitur, quod delectation corruptit aestimationem prudentiae; et hic error assimilatur in agendis errori qui est in speculativis circa discursum principiorum ad conclusionem.
that the character virtues can play such a role, although the latter is not sufficient for establishing the kind of dependence in which we are primarily interested at this venture. But the fact that it is difficult to reason correctly if one is not virtuous does not establish that prudence is essentially dependent upon the character virtues. We thus need to focus on the first reason Aquinas provides in this passage for why we need the virtues.

It is significant in this regard that Aquinas subscribes throughout his corpus to Aristotle’s idea that the character virtues provide us with the correct types of ends, stating, for example, that “One has a right estimation about such ends through a state of character virtue” (QDVirt. 5.2c). However, what is entailed by obtaining a correct estimation of ends through a state of character, and why would a character virtue such as courage be necessary for acquiring a certain end? The type of dispositionalism that I defended in Chapter II appears to be directly related to Aquinas’s discussion of these matters. As we saw in Chapter II, Aquinas maintains that a virtuous person aims to reproduce a certain likeness of their character in action, and that truly virtuous actions in this sense comprise the best type of actions. He also states that imparting a likeness of one’s character to the object of action is the proximate end. This would explain why prudence is dependent on the character virtues, assuming that Aquinas uses “end” in a similar manner throughout his discussion of the connection of the virtues, since he believes that prudence in the strict sense should ultimately assist us in performing the best types of actions.

This provides a straightforward reason for why Aquinas maintains that there is a certain form of conversion between principles (virtuous ends) and conclusions (virtuous activity). He claims in this regard that

There is no conversion between principles and conclusions in the sciences in the sense that someone possessing the principles would also possess the conclusions, as is the case with the character virtues, which was stated above (QDVirt. 5.2.ad8). Aquinas thus regards ends as functioning quite differently from the principles used in theoretical reasoning. A person may be said to know the principles of geometry without having the ability to apply them correctly, which is to say that one can have the principles without having the conclusions, but a person cannot possess virtuous ends if they cannot act upon them in particular situations. Moreover, we need a virtuous disposition of character in order to act in a truly virtuous manner insofar as the latter involves imparting a certain

\[223\] Aquinas appears to focus primarily on the first error in ST I.II.58.5.
\[224\] NE VI.12 (1144a8–9). For a detailed discussion of the interpretative challenges associated with understanding Aristotle, see Moss, “Virtue Makes the Goal Right”; Price, Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle.
\[225\] De fine autem habet aliquis rectam existimationem per habitum virtutis moralis.
\[226\] ... quia in scientiis non convertibiliter se habent principia et conclusiones; ita scilicet quod quicumque habet principia, habeat conclusiones, sicut in moralibus dictum est.
likeness to one’s character to the object of a given action. This does not mean that non-virtuous people cannot correctly reason about what to do and then do the right thing, but rather that they are unable to perform virtuous actions as a part of who they are.

Aquinas maintains that the type of reasoning which follows from virtuous inclinations is true prudential reasoning, and that being continent is not sufficient for possessing prudence. Even if a continent person acts in a manner similar to that of the virtuous person, they do not act in a truly virtuous manner, and the form of reasoning that enables them to perform the right action does not count as prudence. Prudential reason, strictly speaking, must begin with a virtuous inclination, and it is possible to possess such inclinations only if one has a morally good character, as Aquinas explicitly states. The continent person then neither acts in agreement with their character, nor aims at particular ends as a way of being virtuous, because there is no basic likeness between them and the action they are performing. Aquinas is convinced that virtue makes our actions good – or at least better than if one does not act in agreement with a good and virtuous character.\textsuperscript{227}

Aquinas formulates an objection in \textit{Disputed Questions on the Virtues} to the effect that there cannot be more than one virtue insofar as virtue cannot acquire its species from proximate ends because they are infinite in number,\textsuperscript{228} which means that it acquires its species from the ultimate end, which is happiness or God.\textsuperscript{229} There would thus be only be one virtue, that is, virtue as it corresponds to the single ultimate end.\textsuperscript{230} Aquinas’s short response to this objection is very telling in respect to how we should understand his general approach. He does not deny that there is an infinite number of proximate ends insofar as human beings can aim in action at an infinite number of things. However, this infinite number of aims are associated with the finite aspects (\textit{ratio}) of the various character virtues, which is to say that the good things at which human beings aim in their actions fall within the domain of the various character virtues. Many different actions can be performed as an expression of a single character state, as we have seen in Chapter I, and the aspects of the good are not infinite in number.

We may then conclude that virtues are important for prudence not only because they make us less prone to having our actions influenced by emotions, but also because they provide important starting points from which true prudential reasoning starts. This comprises a form of essential dependence,

\textsuperscript{227} As we have seen, this view will stand unchallenged within the medieval context, while Scotus is critical of the idea that virtues contribute to the goodness of actions. For a discussion of Scotus’s position, see Kent, “Rethinking Moral Dispositions”; Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Role of the Moral Virtues.”

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{QDVirt.} 5.2ad13.

\textsuperscript{229} See also \textit{II Sent.} 38.1.1ad3; \textit{ST} I.1.60.1.ad3; \textit{QDVirt.} 5.1.ad10.

\textsuperscript{230} Strictly speaking, there would be two virtues: one acquired character virtue and one infused character virtue.
and character virtues thus render our ability to act in a rationally informed manner into prudence. Aquinas considers action that are performed in agreement with good character as being better, and that this is made possible only by prudence in the strict sense.

We are now in a position to examine why the character virtues depend on prudence.

III.2.5 One cannot possess character virtue without prudence

In general, the dependence of the character virtues on prudence is more straightforward than prudence’s dependence on the character virtues. There is a broad agreement within medieval philosophy that character virtue needs prudence, which follows from the basic idea that good actions must be performed in accordance with reason. An accepted view, for example, is that humans cannot simply act justly without the involvement of reason.

Although the role of reason in human action is a vast topic within Aquinas’s ethics as a whole, my concern in the present discussion involves the particular role it plays in human action as it relates to establishing Strong Global Connection. My position is that if we seek to understand Aquinas’s argument, then we need to focus on what Aquinas must believe in order for the character virtues to be dependent on prudence. More specifically, there are two basic assumptions about character virtue from which Aquinas’s conclusion primarily follows, namely, (1) the due concern view of virtue, and (2) the role of prudence in assigning the means for attaining good ends.

Concerning the first assumption, Aquinas views virtues as states that never lead one to act wrongly or badly in any way. This is a matter of definition for him – virtue is something that one cannot use badly. This does not mean that a person who possesses a virtue cannot do anything bad, but that one cannot use the virtue itself in such a way. Aquinas argues explicitly that a person who possesses charity can sin, but that they cannot sin with the power of that virtue itself. In short, one cannot do anything bad when acting in agreement with a character state that is a true virtue.

It should be noted that the due concern view does not mean Aquinas considers Strong Global Connection to be part of the definition of character virtue, although it plays a central role in the effort to establish Strong Global Connection since it shows that all character virtues depend on prudence for

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231 There are, of course, significant differences concerning how dependence upon prudence is conceptualized.
232 I do not believe my presentation substantially diverges from previous accounts of this matter. However, I hope that it will enable us to see more readily the degree to which Aquinas relies upon prudence being a unified virtue. I will discuss this matter in Section 3 below.
233 QDVirt. 1.2; ST I.II.55.2.
234 QDVirt. 2.12.
their existence. That is to say that prudence makes a good state of character into a character virtue.

From this perspective, virtues are not simply character states that make us more likely to perform some characteristic type of action, but rather incline us to perform characteristic actions in a certain way. Virtues must thus always display due concern. While one is never led astray when acting from a true virtue, prudence is needed to guarantee that one is never led astray by otherwise good inclinations, for good choice does not directly follow from good inclinations. Aquinas argues that virtuous actions can be performed in many ways, and are not performed in the same way in all circumstances. That is why one needs prudence in judgment to determine the correct way. And so the correctness and full goodness of all the other virtues follows from prudence itself (QDVirt. 1.6c).

Actions do not directly follow from virtuous inclinations insofar as choices are always involved in how one should act. Prudence is thus always necessary to ensure right reason in action since inclinations stemming from the character virtues are not sufficient by themselves for making the correct choices. Aquinas maintains in this respect that

An inclination to a fitting end which follows directly from a state of character virtue is not itself sufficient for right choice, but also that one also directly chooses the things which are conducive to the end, which is done through prudence (ST I.II.65.1c).

A person who only has an inclination towards good behavior will not make the right choices in a reliable manner. For example, a person with a specific character would be willing to take certain risks, but it is necessary to know which risks are worth taking. If a person cannot discern the latter, they will not make a good choice and consequently not act virtuously. Insofar as a state of character that gives rise to such wrong actions will not be a true virtue, there is no true virtue without prudence – only inclinations in accordance with prudence may be said to have the mark (ratio) of virtue. Aquinas here follows Aristotle in regarding virtue as a mean, with prudence determining in what the mean consists in each situation. He thus argues that “the mid-point for prudence and for character virtue is the same, but prudence imposes the

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235 For a general discussion of prudence in Aquinas’s ethics, see Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles”; Westberg, Right Practical Reason; and Nelson, The Priority of Prudence.

236 …contigit multipliciter fieri, et non eodem modo in omnibus; unde ad hoc quod rectus modus statuatur, requiritur iudicii prudentia. Et ita ab ipsa est rectitudo et complementum bonitatis in omnibus aliis virtutibus.

237 …ad rectam autem electionem non solum sufficit inclinatio in debitum finem, quod est directe per habitum virtutis moralis; sed etiam quod aliquis directe eligat ea quae sunt ad finem, quod fit per prudentiam.

238 QDVirt. 5.2c.
mid-point, while character virtue has the mid-point imposed upon it” (*QDVirt*. 1.13). This leads Aquinas to describe prudence as the cause of the virtues. Prudence creates virtue in the sense that, by acting on one’s inclinations in accordance with prudence, one becomes actually virtuous instead of merely possessing imperfect virtue.

We can formulate the overall argument as follows:

(P1) No state of character is a true virtue if it does not dispose a person to reliably determine what is right in their actions and affections (the due concern view of virtue).

(P2) A good state of character involves an inclination to good ends.

(P3) There are many ways in which one may act upon an inclination towards good ends.

(P4) Without prudence, one cannot determine which of these actions are in fact conducive to attaining these good ends (*ad finem*).

(P5) Acting on an inclination towards good ends without the discretion of prudence does not reliably lead one to do what is conducive to attaining these good ends.

(P6) A state of character without prudence will not dispose a person to reliably determine what is right in their actions and affections.

(Con1) A state of character without prudence is not a true virtue.

From this viewpoint, prudence makes a virtuous disposition into a virtue, which is to say that the character virtues are essentially dependent upon prudence.

We are now turn to a discussion of Aquinas’s argument as a whole.

### III.2.6 The Dependence Argument

On this view, Aquinas believes that *Strong Global Connection* follows directly from the mutual essential dependence that he claims exists between prudence and character virtues. We can formulate the *Dependence Argument* in the following way:

(P7) If one has a character virtue perfectly, one has prudence perfectly because all character virtues are essentially dependent on prudence.

(P8) If one has prudence perfectly, one has all the character virtues perfectly because prudence is essentially dependent on all the character virtues.

(Con2) If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has all the character virtues perfectly.

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239 *QDVirt*. 5.3c.
This allows Aquinas to argue that one lacks all the character virtues (perfectly) if one lacks any given character virtue (perfectly). He states explicitly that

But if he exercises himself by good behavior in regard to one matter, but not in regard to another, for instance, by behaving well in matters of anger, but not in matters of desire, he will indeed acquire a certain state of restraining his anger; but this state will lack the nature of virtue, through the absence of prudence, which is wanting in matters of desire (ST I.II.65.1c).  

We should note how heavily Aquinas relies here upon the distinction between good behavior and virtuous behavior – a person can be engaged in good behavior, but we should not ascribe true virtue to him or her if they lack prudence in some other area. Aquinas is not merely saying that a person who lacks a given virtue will eventually act against other character virtues as well. He rather argues that the lack of any given character virtue amounts to a lack of prudence, and that this lack of prudence undermines the possibility that they have any character virtue perfectly.

This integration of prudence with all the character virtues leads Aquinas to conclude that the character virtues grow in proportion to each other, thus claiming that the various virtues are always in equal proportion within a given human being. Virtue grows like the fingers of a hand growing in proportion to each other. In this sense, prudence is a formal perfection of all the virtues – for Aquinas, we are never more virtuous than we are prudent.

Aquinas is of course aware that some people are more prone than others to perform actions in accordance with a given virtue, but he argues that although they have more good inclinations in some areas than others, they do not have more virtue. Acquiring a strong inclination to good action is a form of moral development, but it does not constitute development in virtue in the strict sense if one does not also develop prudence.

Although mutual dependence between prudence and the character can ground Strong Global Connection, Aquinas’s argument hinges on prudence being a unified virtue. Aquinas himself notes in his Commentary on the Ethics that

if different species of prudence were concerned with the matter of different character virtues, as is the case with different objects in the genus of art,

240 Et si quidem circa omnes exercitetur bene operando, acquiret habitus omnium virtutum moralium. Si autem exercitetur bene operando circa unam materiam, non autem circa aliam, puta bene se habendo circa iras, non autem circa concupiscientias; acquiret quidem habitum aliquem ad refrenandum iras, qui tamen non habebit rationem virtutis, propter defectum prudentiae, quae circa concupiscientias corrumpitur.

241 QDVirt. 5.3c.
nothing would hinder one character virtue from existing without another, each of them having a prudence that corresponds to it (InEthic 6.11.14)\(^\text{242}\).

What grounds does Aquinas have for maintaining that prudence is a unified virtue?

III.3 Is prudence a unified virtue?

III.3.1 Only partial connection?

A number of scholars have recently focused on examining the relations between Aquinas’s account of the connection of the virtues and the opposing arguments presented by Olivi, Scotus, and Ockham.\(^\text{243}\) These three thinkers believe that prudence is not a unified virtue, and that there is a separate and corresponding type of prudence for each of the character virtues.\(^\text{244}\) This would leave little reason to accept the Dependence Argument.

For the sake of clarity, I will restate the Dependence Argument as follows, assuming that prudence possesses no substantial unity.

(P9) If one has a character virtue perfectly, one has its corresponding prudence perfectly because all character virtues are essentially dependent on prudence.

(P10) If one has the corresponding prudence of one character virtue perfectly, one has all the character virtues perfectly because prudence is essentially dependent on all the character virtues.

(Con3) If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has all the character virtues perfectly.

There is little reason to accept second premise in this argument (P10). Why would we assume that a person who possesses prudential ability in respect to moderation, for example, must possess all the other character virtues as well? Are there any good reasons to view prudence as a unified virtue?

Aquinas argues that the various virtues, unlike skills and sciences, are ordered in respect to each other (ordinare ad invicem), and he provides three reasons in support of this idea, namely, (1) there is a certain form of overlap between the character virtues, (2) virtues are not acquired one by one, and (3) the emotions are interrelated. I will briefly examine these three issues before

\(^{242}\) ...si essent diversae prudentiae circa materias diversarum virtutum moralium, sicut sunt diversa artificiorum genera, nihil prohiberet unam virtutem moralem esse sine alia, unaquaque earum habente prudentiam sibi correspondentem.

\(^{243}\) See Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided”; Osborne, “Thomas and Scotus on Prudence.”

\(^{244}\) For an overview of these discussions, see Wood, Ockham on the Virtues, 51–57.
addressing how they could be used to ground a unified conception of prudence.

III.3.2 Overlapping

Aquinas maintains there is an important difference between skills and the character virtues in that the character virtues overlap, claiming that “Moral principles, on the other hand, are mutually ordered, so that a failure in one leads to failures in others” (QDVirt. 5.2ad4; see also ST I.II.65.1.ad4). Briefly stated, Aquinas claims that failure in any given character virtue leads to failure in the others. This is not the case with skills in that failure in carpentry, for example, does not entail failure at being a cobbler.

Aquinas provides the following example:

those who fail to hold to the principle, which is a part of moderation, that they should not chase after sensual desires, will from time to time, by doing just that, end up acting unjustly and therefore violating justice (QDVirt. 5.2ad4).

We may thus say that the different character virtues provide a certain amount of support for each other, and that it is easier to be just if one is also in control of one’s anger.

But this type of reasoning does not take us very far. Those who deny Strong Global Connection need not deny neither that failure in one virtue might lead to failure in others, nor that different character virtues might support each other. They may instead argue that one would need more than one virtue only to the extent that they support each other.

Watson explains the problem in a helpful manner, remarking that

If you were totally insensitive in one respect, then you could not reliably show due concern for considerations of any kind. Hence this reasoning favors only a weak unity thesis: If you have any virtue, you will have some sensitivity for considerations relevant to the others – you will have, in one sense, all the virtues “to some degree.”

We may conclude that this type of overlapping, which at most supports Weak Global Connection, does not by itself establish a unified conception of prudence.

\[\text{245} \ldots \text{ita quod per defectum unius sequeretur etiam defectus in aliis; puta, si quis deficeret ab hoc principio quod est concupiscentias non esse sequendas, quod pertinet ad concupiscentiam, sequeretur interdum quod sequendo concupiscentiam faceret injuriam.}\]

\[\text{246} \text{We will see in the following chapter that Godfrey terms this supportive connection. He views this as distinct from Aristotle’s original discussion.}\]

\[\text{247} \text{Watson, “Virtues in Excess,” 60.}\]

\[\text{248} \text{Ibid.}\]
III.3.3 We do not learn the virtues one by one

Aquinas believes that we do not learn the virtues one at a time, but rather together, arguing that

the acquired virtues are caused by what we undertake. It must also happen that if someone undertakes to acquire one of them, this will cause all of them to exist at the same time. When one is acquired, prudence is also acquired at the same time, and all the others are obtained along with that (QDVirt. 5.1ad10).249

This claim is faced with the same problem as the argument for overlapping insofar as one who denies Strong Global Connection need not disagree with it. We should note that although Aquinas here relies on the idea that we acquire prudence whenever we acquire a virtue, he in fact needs to demonstrate that we cannot acquire merely a part of prudence. This argument presumes a certain unity of prudence that one who denies Strong Global Connection need not accept.

III.3.4 Emotional connection

Character virtues are distinct from skills and sciences in that they concern our emotions, and Aquinas maintains that our emotions are connected. He argues in this regard that

For all the passions have their rise in certain initial passions, namely, love and hatred, and terminate in certain others, namely, pleasure and sorrow. Similarly, all the operations that are the matter of moral virtue are related to one another, and to the passions. Hence the whole matter of moral virtues falls under the one rule of prudence (ST I.II.65.1ad3).250

Emotional connection is a uniquely Thomistic contribution to this debate, and it is an interesting topic in its own right.251 By itself, however, it does not help in establishing Strong Global Connection because it does not appear to entail that prudence needs to be a unified virtue. It only implies that if one can reason well in respect to a given virtue, then one has at least some ability to reason

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249 …acquisitae causantur a proposito; et necesse est quod simul causentur in homine qui sibi proponit acquirere unam virtutem; et non acquiret, nisi simul acquirat prudentiam, cum qua omnes habentur. Much the same view is defended in the contemporary virtue ethics literature by e.g. Julia Annas; see Annas Intelligent Virtue, chap. 6.

250 Nam omnes passiones, a quibusdam primis procedentes, scilicet amore et odio, ad quasdam alias terminantur, scilicet delectationem et tristitiam. Et similiter omnes operationes quae sunt virtutis moralis materia, habent ordinem ad invicem, et etiam ad passiones. Et ideo tota materia moralium virtutum sub una ratione prudentiae cadit.

251 For a discussion of Aquinas’s account of emotions, see Lombardo, The Logic of Desire; King, “Emotion in Medieval Thought”; Miner, Thomas Aquinas on the Passions; Knuuttila, Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy.
well in respect to the others. This does not show us anything more than *Weak Global Connection*.

In summary, these three arguments do not establish the specific unity of prudence that Aquinas needs, which would indicate that he provides no sound argument in support of *Strong Global Connection*. Are there other arguments for the unity of prudence in Aquinas to which we could turn to establish a better ground for his position?

### III.3.5 Further reasons for the unity of prudence?

Osborne and Irwin have identified two additional reasons for why Aquinas regards prudence as being unified, namely, prudence concerns good actions in life as a whole, and prudence orders all virtuous actions towards the final end of happiness.²⁵²

Osborne draws our attention to the first of these – Aquinas’s claim that prudence is concerned with life as a whole (*totam vitam*)²⁵³ – whereby it would seem to be the case that prudence is concerned with all the character virtues. However, I do not believe that the passage noted provides much support for the type of unity that is required by the Dependence Argument. The contrast Aquinas establishes in this discussion involves the good in one’s life as a whole and the good in a part of one’s life. He provides the example of the prudence of a sailor and prudence *simpliciter*, which is concerned with the good in one’s life as a whole, not merely with the good in one’s life as a sailor. There is a type of reasoning that we need in order to be a good sailor, and we can call such reasoning prudence, but Aquinas maintains that it is not prudence *simpliciter*.

Someone who does not believe in *Strong Global Connection* has no reason to deny this distinction. One could claim, for example, that it is possible for a person to make a good decision in respect to moderation without possessing prudence in respect to justice. Moreover, such a person would likely not be concerned only with the role of moderation in some given part of their life, such as in their role as a sailor, but rather in their life as a whole. I think we can conclude that this passage provides no direct support for the claim that prudence is a unified virtue.

### III.3.6 Unity through happiness

Irwin argues that Aquinas’s basic reason for assuming that prudence is a unified virtue is that he believes that prudence orders all virtue towards the final end of happiness. Because all virtues are thus ordered towards happiness by prudence, then prudence must be unified – it is the one virtue through

²⁵² Osborne, “Thomas and Scotus on Prudence”; Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided.”
²⁵³ *ST* II.II.47.13, see also *ST* I.II.57.4.
which we choose the other virtues as a way of becoming happy. If this were the case for Aquinas, he would believe that prudence is unified because there must be one virtue that directs all the virtues to happiness.

Irwin states that we should think of all the virtues as means to one and the same end, arguing that “A stronger connexion is their connexion with the common end of human life; the correct conception of this single common end is required for every virtue.” From this viewpoint, a part of prudence is to deliberate about happiness and choose the character virtues as various means to that end. Irwin calls this function macro-prudence, and it stands in contrast to micro-prudence, which we need in order to decide what to do in a particular situation and have examined above. Irwin further argues that not only are these two types of prudence functions of one unified virtue of prudence, it is not possible to possess micro-prudence without macro-prudence. He states in this regard that “when prudence forms the point of view of each virtue in light of deliberation about the ultimate end, it thereby brings to bear the point of view of the other virtues.” We can refer to this general approach as the final end reading.

I believe that we need to ask two questions in addressing this interpretation. First, does Aquinas accept that there is such a thing as macro-prudence? Second, does ascribing macro-prudence to Aquinas assist him in any way in dealing with the problem of the unity of prudence?

The strongest support for the role of macro-prudence comes from the following passage, in which Aquinas states that

Prudence directs the character virtues not only in choosing the means, but also in appointing (praestituere) the end. The end of each character virtue is to attain the mean in its proper matter, which mean is appointed (determinatur) according to the right judgment of prudence, as stated in NE II.6 and VI.13 (ST I.II.66.3.ad3).

I do not find this text to be conclusive, however, since Aquinas explains in his Commentary on the Sentences what he takes praestituere to entail in this

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254 Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided,” 210–12. It is possible that Osborne and Irwin may be speaking about the same issue insofar as happiness concerns life as a whole. However, I have chosen to treat them separately here because they apparently emphasize different aspects of the matter.
255 Irwin, The Development of Ethics, 589.
256 Ibid., 208f.
257 Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided,” 220.
258 Irwin maintains that Aristotle’s view entails that virtues must co-operate with each other. Such co-operation is central to the type of virtue holism I develop in the chapter V, but it need not rely either on macro-prudence, or on a specific account of happiness.
259 Ad tertium dicendum quod prudentia non solum dirigit virtutes Morales in eligendo ea quae sunt ad finem, sed etiam in praestituendo finem. Est autem finis uniuscuiusque virtutis moralis attingere medium in propria materia, quod quidem medium determinatur secundum rectam rationem prudentiae, ut dicitur in II et VI Ethic.
context, namely, that it appoints the end only in a certain sense (*sic quodammodo*). That is to say that because the end of virtue lies in the mean, and prudence appoints the mean, it is in this sense that prudence appoints the end of virtue. Aquinas in fact explicitly states that natural reason/synderesis provides the end, not prudence:

The end concerns the character virtues, not as though they appointed the end, but because they tend to the end which is appointed by natural reason. In this they are helped by prudence, which prepares the way for them, by disposing of the means. Hence it follows that prudence is more excellent than the moral virtues, and moves them: yet synderesis moves prudence, just as the understanding of principles moves science (*ST* II.II.47.6.ad3).

But should we perhaps ascribe Irwin’s conception to Aquinas, since it appears useful in helping us explain why Aquinas maintains that the character virtues are connected? The problem is that it is not clear how happiness as the final end can serve to ground prudence as a unified virtue in the relevant sense, particularly since the mean–end relationship is generally ill-suited for establishing the kind of unity that prudence needs for the Dependence Argument to hold. The mean–end relation is in fact ill-suited to ground any form of connection as it is understood in this chapter. A trivial example of this point is that many things are needed for building a house (brick, wood, cement), and all have the same end (a finished house), but this does not entail that one cannot first obtain the bricks and the other things later. One might think that the character virtues are ordered to happiness in a similar way – one may first acquire justice, with its corresponding type of prudence, and then acquire the other virtues, with their corresponding types of prudence. Although choosing a character virtue might entail that one needs to recognize some aspects of the other virtues as well, we have already seen that such an overlap does not demonstrate that in order to have one character virtue, one needs the other character virtues perfectly. Even if we accept that there is such a thing as macro-prudence, it does not provide the type of unity we are looking for.

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260 *I Sent.* 3.33.2.3c.
261 For a detailed critique of Irwin along these lines, see Farrell, *The Ends of the Moral Virtues*, 116–17. There is a further question in this regard concerning how we should interpret the relation between the character virtues and synderesis.
262 *Ad tertium dicendum quod finis non pertinet ad virtutes morales tanquam ipsae praestituant finem, sed quia tendunt in finem a ratione naturali praestitutum. Ad quod iuvantur per prudentiam, quae eis viam parat, disponendo ea quae sunt ad finem. Unde reliquitur quod prudentia sit nobilior virtutibus moralius, et moveat eas. Sed synderesis movet prudentiam, sicut intellectus principiorum scientiam.
263 Irwin is aware that there is limited direct textual evidence for his account. He instead argues that Godfrey and Henry of Ghent make this difference explicit by distinguishing between universal and particular prudence. I argue in Chapter V that Godfrey does not embrace anything resembling macro-prudence as understood within this context.
In conclusion, I do not think that Aquinas’s commitment to happiness as our final end provides the basis for a sufficient explanation of his commitment to the unity of prudence. Irwin argues that the debate about the connection of the virtues in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was driven by various ideas concerning the role of happiness in ethics. However, an unfortunate consequence of Irwin’s proposed reading is that it in fact describes this debate as driven by a mistaken understanding of the relationship between the connection of the character virtues and happiness. Stated briefly, it is not necessary to endorse the connection of the virtues if one accepts eudaimonism, and conversely. I believe it would be unfortunate if we have to describe the medieval debate about the connection of virtues as driven not by valid arguments, but by some affiliation between two logically independent views.

I instead propose that we need to focus on how Aquinas thinks about virtues as dispositions, how dispositions grow, and what they are about. I believe this approach will explain the structure of Aquinas’s argument and what he aims to show. It will also show where its weakness lies.

III.3.7 Prudence must be indivisible

Prudence needs to be a unified virtue in two distinct ways for the Dependence Argument to establish Strong Global Connection, namely, both as a single virtue and an indivisible virtue. First, prudence as a whole cannot consist of many distinct dispositions. It ought not to be similar to practical skill as a whole. Practical skill as a whole is better thought of as a collection of many different and distinct skills in the way that carpentry and navigation are distinct skills. Prudence as a whole ought to be seen as a single disposition. I term this the singularity requirement.

Second, it is necessary to demonstrate that prudence as a single virtue cannot gain perfection in a partial and accumulative manner. It would then not be possible to perfectly possess prudence only in respect to courage but not moderation as well. Prudence must then to be different from geometry, for example, which one can possess perfectly in a partial manner even though it is correctly regarded as a single science. Stated otherwise, while it is possible to know some truth of geometry perfectly without knowing all of geometry, this would not be possible concerning prudence in respect to Aquinas’s argument. I will refer to this demand as the indivisibility requirement.

For Aquinas’s argument to hold, prudence must fulfill both the singularity requirement and the indivisibility requirement. We can now restate the Dependence Argument in a way that makes explicit the assumption that prudence is indivisible.

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265 Irwin himself recognizes this fact (ibid., 214).
(P11) If one has a character virtue perfectly, one has prudence as an undivided whole perfectly because all character virtues are essentially dependent on prudence.

(P12) If one has prudence as an undivided whole perfectly, one has all the character virtues perfectly because prudence is essentially dependent on all the character virtues.

(Con4) If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has all the character virtues perfectly.

Distinguishing these two requirements not only casts light on the structure of Aquinas’s argument for Strong Global Connection, it also illustrates what his argument for the unity of prudence aims to demonstrate. I maintain that the considerations above aim to show that prudence fulfills the singularity requirement, whereby Aquinas seeks to demonstrate that prudence as a single virtue concerns all the character virtues. We should recognize this is what Aquinas needs to do from his own perspective. My view is that he assumes that if prudence fulfills the singularity requirement, it will also fulfill the indivisibility requirement.

We will now briefly examine why Aquinas maintains that virtues as dispositions in general are indivisible.

III.3.8 The extension of the virtues

Aquinas maintains that virtues grow differently from other accidents of the human soul, arguing that we never possess a character virtue in different degrees regarding that to which it extends. He remarks that

Now whosoever has a virtue, moderation, for example, has it in respect to whatever moderation extends to. But this does not apply to science and art, for every grammarian does not know everything relating to grammar. And in this sense the Stoics rightly said, as Simplicius states in his Commentary on the Predicaments, that virtue cannot be more or less, as science and skills can; because the nature of virtue consists in a maximum (STI.II.66.1).

What does Aquinas commit himself to in this passage? More particularly, why can virtues not be more and less (recipit magis et minus)? Aquinas does not mean by this expression that different people do not have virtue to different

\[\text{Quicumque autem habet aliquam virtutem, puta temperantiam, habet ipsam quantum ad omnia quae se temperantia extendit. Quod de scientia et arte non contingit, non enim quicumque est grammaticus, scit omnia quae ad grammaticam pertinent. Et secundum hoc bene dixerunt Stoici, ut Simplicius dicit in commento praedicamentorum, quod virtus non recipit magis et minus, sicut scientia vel ars; eo quod ratio virtutis consistit in maximo.}\]
degrees. He recognizes, for example, that some people are more courageous than others. His idea is rather that we cannot have more courage in one area of our lives and less in another. It is not that when one improves in a virtue, such as courage, they acquire more courage in the way that one acquires more money when they become richer. Virtue instead grows or develops in a manner similar to what we would say when something becomes hotter – we would not say that a stone after becoming hotter has a second hotness added to a first hotness, but rather that the same hotness has intensified. Just as Aquinas denies that something becoming hotter is an accumulative process in which an additional part of hotness is added to some object, he also denies that we gain virtue in an accumulative manner. He rather maintains that virtue grows by intensifying such that it comes closer to an ideal state.

A more familiar example may help us to better understand Aquinas’s view. For instance, there are two ways in which we might say a house becomes whiter. We could say that a house becomes whiter if a part of it is painted completely white, whereby the house as a whole is whiter because a given part of it is completely white. Alternatively, we could paint the entire house with a thin layer of white paint such that the previous color remains visible. The house as a whole would then be whiter even though no part of it was fully white.

Aquinas holds the view, which he attributes to the Stoics, that there is no such thing as a partial gain in virtue. He thus argues that there is this difference between knowledge and virtue: since it is not part of the notion of knowledge that it actually embraces all objects, there is no need for someone knowledgeable to know everything that can be known. However, it is part of the notion of virtue that someone acts virtuously in every respect. That is why knowledge can be increased or decreased both concerning the number of its objects and concerning how intensively the subject possesses it. But virtue can be increased only in one of these ways (QDVirt. 1.11.ad10).

Virtue is thus different from knowledge, which, analogously to the house becoming whiter, may be increased either by acquiring some new knowledge, or by making the knowledge we already possess more secure. Aquinas would maintain that the extension of our knowledge increases if we learn that water is actually H_2O, but that it intensifies when it becomes more secure. The latter might entail that we gained a deeper understanding of why water must be H_2O.

QDVirt. 5.2c.

For an excellent discussion of the medieval debate on this topic subsequent to Aquinas, see Dumont, “Succession Theory of Forms.”

For a discussion of how charity increases, see QDVirt. 1.11.

Sed tamen hoc interest inter scientiam et virtutem: quia de ratione scientiae non est quod se extendat in actum respectu omnium obiectorum: non enim est necessae quod sciens omnia scibilia cognoscat. Sed de ratione virtutis est quod in omnibus virtuose se agat. Unde scientia potest augeri vel secundum numerum obiectorum, vel secundum intensionem eius in subiecto; virtus autem uno modo tantum.
With such a deeper understanding one would be less prone to abandon such a true belief. In contrast, virtues can only intensify. As a result, when someone maintains good behavior in a given area of life but not in another, we would not say that they possess virtue in the one area but not in the other – in Aquinas’s own terminology, character virtues never gain in extension. Although only one part of a house could be perfectly white, Aquinas maintains that we never possess a virtue perfectly in only one area relevant to that virtue. If a person acts well in some areas and bad in others, they do not possess virtue in the one area but not in another. We never possess a virtue in respect to only some part of its material object.

Aquinas does maintain, however, that one can possess a virtue only to some degree since he maintains that they are evaluated holistically. A person who resists the temptation of sweets, but not what is savory, is not partly moderate in the sense of possessing moderation only in respect to sweets.

We cannot ultimately be moderate in some situations, and not in others, because becoming moderate involves gaining a disposition that leads to moderate action in all relevant situations. Moral development consists of approaching closer to a certain ideal, not in acquiring parts of dispositional states – we grow in virtue by possessing it to a greater degree in whatever we do, not by becoming better only in particular types of situations. The relevant difference between the character virtues and the sciences is that it is possible for a person to know true propositions in respect to only particular areas of a given science. We could then divide that science along the lines of those propositions, and say that a person knows the respective part of that science perfectly, in that skills and science are divisible in the sense that we can possess only parts of them. But the character virtues are indivisible from Aquinas’s perspective – we always possess the same degree of a given virtue, such as courage, in all the areas to which it pertains.

III.3.9 Prudence, indivisibility, and a failed argument

Aquinas regards prudence as resembling the character virtues more closely than science and skills, and he apparently assumes that because the indivisibility requirement holds for the character virtues, it will also hold for prudence. Given that assumption, what Aquinas needs to show is that prudence fulfills the singularity requirement, and that it in fact includes all the virtues in its extension.

In my estimation, Aquinas regards himself as having demonstrated that prudence is a single virtue – all of his arguments for the unity of prudence are concerned with showing that prudence is not an aggregation of different kinds of prudence. In this respect, his three reasons for the unity of prudence that we discussed above should be viewed as comprising an argument for why
prudence is single virtue\textsuperscript{271} – he never considers the question why we cannot grow in prudence by acquiring new parts of it (\textit{secundum numerum obiectorum}). Aquinas’s discussion is in part successful from this perspective since he provides at least some support for the idea that prudence is not a mere collection of dispositional states, which is something he needs to demonstrate. However, this reading also indicates that Aquinas’s overall discussion is unsuccessful because what he argues for is not what he ultimately needs to demonstrate.

The notion of the indivisibility of the character virtues is directly related to what is entailed by acting in agreement with one’s character, including the type of dispositionalism explored in Chapter II above. We cannot say that a person acts in character if they uphold a given type of virtuous behavior only in some situations and not others, for a person’s character is determined by how they respond to a broad set of situations that are relevant to some state of character. Aquinas would say that only a person who upholds a given form of behavior in changing situations can be said to impart a certain likeness of their character onto their actions. However, I do not think that Aquinas has presented good reasons for maintaining that the \textit{indivisibility requirement} applies to prudence, even though he clearly views prudence as quite different from skills and science.

Aquinas states that the perfection of prudence lies in command (\textit{praecipere}),\textsuperscript{272} and that this form of command is a rational affirmation of what one judges to be the best course of action. He adds that the difference from skills and science is manifest in the fact that prudence cannot be truly forgotten, although forgetfulness hinders prudence insofar as command depends on knowledge that can be forgotten.\textsuperscript{273} Aquinas conceives of prudence as not directly corresponding to the amount of practical knowledge one has, which might lead one to think that differing practical conclusions cannot be used as a principle of division for prudence. For example, if one forgets some moral principle or its correct application, then we should say not that prudence has been lost, but rather that a person’s prudence is hindered by forgetfulness. In addition, Aquinas regards the type of rational affirmation involved in command as indivisible in respect to moral principles and their applications, which is to say that even if there are as many different conclusions in respect to prudence as there in the sciences, prudential affirmation would be unified and indivisible from his perspective. We might then believe that this difference explains why the \textit{indivisibility requirement} applies to prudence, but not to skills and science.

\textsuperscript{271} Aquinas would neither accept, nor endorse Julia Annas’ suggestion that skills provide a good model for explaining the connection of the virtues (\textit{Intelligent Virtue}, 87). Godfrey argues that a practicing doctor’s specific type of skill provides us with a relevant model for understanding the indivisibility of prudence.

\textsuperscript{272} \textit{ST} II.II.47.8.

\textsuperscript{273} \textit{ST} II.II.47.16; \textit{QDV} 26.7.
However, even in respect to Aquinas’s own conception of prudence, there is no such thing as acting in agreement with prudence alone. We have seen that prudential reasoning always begins with virtuous inclinations, which are part of the character virtues, and the fact that command is the chief act of prudence can perhaps be taken as supporting the idea that we do not gain prudence in an accumulative manner as we do in the sciences, conclusion by conclusion. Nevertheless, prudence still appears to be divisible along the lines of the character virtues insofar as virtuous action always begins with an inclination that results from given virtues, whereby the aspects of goodness explored in the previous chapter would function as principles of division. If this is the case, however, then Aquinas’s claim that prudence is indivisible would be challenged by the view that there are distinct character virtues, which he himself has gone to great lengths to develop.\(^{274}\)

We may then conclude that Aquinas ultimately fails to defend Strong Global Connection because he does not take into consideration how its own principle for distinguishing the character virtues (the Goodness Criterion) could apply to prudence itself. He needs to demonstrate that prudence meets the indivisibility requirement, but he only provides us arguments to show that it meets the singularity requirement.

Is my overall reading any better than the final end reading insofar as both ultimately regard Aquinas’s argumentation as unsuccessful? I believe that it is. First, it illustrates in detail how Aquinas himself viewed his argumentation, and it also indicates precisely where his position lacks support and what would have been needed to make his argument work. This is a more charitable interpretation than taking Aquinas as believing that one particular view – happiness as a final end of human action – implies another – the connection of the character virtues – when it does not, particularly given the fact that Aquinas never claimed that it did.

Second, the interpretation I present helps us to better grasp Aquinas’s place within the medieval debate. Aquinas takes virtues as dispositional states that are indivisible by default, which is a position that Scotus forcefully challenges. Scotus also maintains that any accident, including virtuous dispositions, grows through the addition of new parts.\(^{275}\) This novel conception of dispositions provides Scotus with a good reason to be skeptical of Aquinas’s account in general.

We will explore Godfrey’s attempt to defend the unity of prudence in the following chapter. Godfrey also accepts the indivisibility of prudence, and he seeks to identify a particular activity of prudence that in fact requires that prudence be indivisible. If we are looking for explicit arguments for the unity of prudence that focus on how prudence functions holistically, then we should turn to Godfrey, not to Aquinas.

\(^{274}\) We will discuss in Chapter V that this is how Godfrey understands the challenge.

\(^{275}\) For an overview of this discussion, see Cross, *The Physics of Duns Scotus*, 171–92.
III.4 Conclusion

We have seen that Aquinas is committed to *Strong Global Connection*. I have argued that Aquinas is also committed to what I term the mutual essential dependence of prudence and the character virtues, whereby prudence makes a good disposition into a character virtue and the character virtues transform the ability to make rationally informed actions into prudence. This mutual dependence grounds Aquinas’s conception of *Strong Global Connection*, and his argument in support of this view relies both on a form of dispositionalism, and on a due concern view of virtue. These interesting, albeit contentious ideas indicate that we need to think about virtue in a specific way in order to make Aquinas’s argument for *Strong Global Connection* work.

In the final analysis, however, Aquinas’s focus on the mutual dependence between prudence and the character virtues also constitutes the weakness of his approach in that he never provides an argument for why prudence needs to be indivisible in the sense that we never possess only a part of prudence. I have stated in this regard that he apparently assumes that prudence functions similarly to the character virtues, which he believes can never be acquired only in part. Aquinas never really addresses the problem that his account of the distinct aspects of the good might serve as a principle of division for prudence.

My reading of Aquinas is faced with a major challenge, however. Bonnie Kent has recently argued that Aquinas cannot have thought that all the virtues are connected because of the foundational status he gives to the cardinal virtues, namely, prudence, moderation, courage, and justice. I will turn now my attention to how this question can be addressed.
Chapter IV: Connection and Cardinal Virtues

Introduction

In the previous chapter we explored how the mutual dependence between prudence and the character virtues makes it impossible to possess a character virtue perfectly without possessing all the character virtues perfectly. I argued that Aquinas believes in what I refer to as Strong Global Connection.

However, this reading has recently been challenged by Bonnie Kent, who maintains that Aquinas could not have thought that all the character virtues are connected, arguing that Strong Global Connection is incompatible with his account of the cardinal virtues (moderation, courage, justice, and prudence). Since Aquinas views the cardinal virtues as principal virtues that serve as the foundations for all other character virtues, Kent claims that the cardinal virtues themselves cannot be dependent in some way upon non-cardinal virtues, such as generosity or good temper. Kent thus regards Aquinas as being only apparently in agreement with Aristotle insofar as he accepts a more limited account of the connection of the character virtues. She reads Aquinas as defending the view that not only do the cardinal virtues form the foundation for all the other character virtues, they can be acquired without acquiring the other character virtues as well. I will refer to this more limited view of connection of the virtues as Cardinal Connection.

My aim in this chapter is to evaluate Kent’s reasons for this reading and argue that Aquinas’s account of the cardinal virtues does not undermine a commitment to Strong Global Connection. I will briefly present Aquinas’s account and the foundational status he assigns to the cardinal virtues. I will focus on two basic reasons Kent puts forward for Cardinal Connection. These are (1) Aquinas believes that generosity relies on justice, but that justice does not rely upon generosity, whereby generosity is regarded as an adornment to justice. This implies that we can possess justice without generosity, which would comprise an exception to Strong Global Connection. (2) Aquinas views the cardinal virtues as principal virtues and the non-cardinal virtues as

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277 Andrew Kim does not seem to commit to either reading. Although he states that his discussion focuses on the cardinal virtues, he does not explicitly state that he believes that connection of the virtues applies only to the cardinal virtues (Kim, “Progress in the Good,” n. 1). However, he seems to suggest at times that only the cardinal virtues follow from infused charity (“Thomas Aquinas on the Connection of the Virtues,” 153).
secondary virtues, which Kent takes to mean that secondary virtues cannot be necessary for acquiring principal virtues.

I argue that neither of these considerations provides conclusive reasons for *Cardinal Connection*. I discuss two examples from Aquinas which suggest that the cardinal virtues can indeed rely upon non-cardinal virtues, and conclude that we do not have sufficient grounds to accept the view that Aquinas does not accept *Strong Global Connection*.

The chapter consists of two main sections. In the first I briefly explore Aquinas’s account of the cardinal virtues, while in the second I examine Kent’s two arguments in support of *Cardinal Connection*.

**IV.I Cardinal Virtues**

The idea that moderation, courage, justice, and prudence possess a special status among the virtues, which has enjoyed a long-standing importance in western moral philosophy, traces its origins to Plato’s *Republic*. The nature of these virtues as cardinal virtues was actively discussed throughout the medieval period, and many thinkers at that time regarded what it means to be a cardinal virtue, and whether the traditional list was correct, as important philosophical questions.\(^{278}\) The medieval discussion of the cardinal virtues differs from the discussion of virtue in contemporary philosophy. While moderation, courage, justice, and prudence are still often viewed as standard examples of virtues, the notion of cardinal virtues, with very few exceptions, plays no role in the current discussions of virtue ethics.\(^{279}\) In contrast, Aquinas argues that moral life turns upon the cardinal virtues, which serve as the foundation for the other character virtues.\(^{280}\) Aquinas’s interest in the cardinal virtues stems not only from the importance he believes they have for morality, but also from the specific problem of how to account for the cardinal virtues within a broadly Aristotelian view of the virtues.

I agree with Jörn Müller in that the best way in which to approach Aquinas’s discussion of the cardinal virtues is to regard it as an effort to reconcile a conflict between a broadly Aristotelian and a Stoic understanding of the nature of virtue. The Stoic approach takes the four cardinal virtues to be general virtues, with the other character virtues viewed as species of

\(^{278}\) For an overview of the discussion concerning cardinal virtues in medieval moral theory, see Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages*.


\(^{280}\) For an excellent discussion of the background to Aquinas’s account, see Houser, *The Cardinal Virtues*, 1–82.
The cardinal virtues are then particularly important and foundational insofar as they comprise a general structure around which all other virtues are arranged.

Aquinas, following Philip the Chancellor, aims to retain the idea that the character virtues are, as we have seen in Chapter I, distinct dispositional states that have their own matter and are distinguished by a unique aspect of the good. However, if moderation, courage, justice, and prudence are distinct dispositional virtues, can they possess the generality they were assigned in Aquinas’s tradition? In addressing this issue, Aquinas seeks to provide a way in which to regard these four virtues as cardinal virtues without conceiving of them as general virtues. In this sense, Aquinas’s account of the cardinal virtues is a product of his undertaking to integrate differing ideas from the tradition.

The cardinal virtues are undoubtedly important for Aquinas, and he discusses them in detail throughout his corpus in such works as the Commentary on the Sentences, Prima Secunda, and Disputed Questions on the Virtues. The entire discussion of virtue in the Secunda Secundae is in fact centered around the cardinal virtues, with detailed explanations for virtually every character virtue either in respect to whether it is a cardinal virtue, or concerning how it is related to one of the cardinal virtues. The notion of the cardinal virtues lies at the center of Aquinas’s entire theoretical project regarding virtue, such as in the manner whereby he maintains that any enumeration of character virtues must begin with the cardinal virtues and proceed to the other character virtues on the basis of their relations to them. He proposes a taxonomy in which every moral virtue is either a cardinal virtue, or a virtue annexed to one of the cardinal virtues, such as how generosity is annexed to justice, good temper to moderation, magnanimity to courage, and good deliberation to prudence.

The problem that Kent has identified is that Aquinas’s theory appears to provide the cardinal virtues with such a foundational role that they cannot be dependent upon non-cardinal virtues. If there is in fact a problem with reconciling Strong Global Connection with Aquinas’s account of the cardinal virtues, it resides upon how we understand what makes the cardinal virtues foundational from his perspective.

IV.I.1 What makes something a cardinal virtue?

Aquinas’s most basic explanation for why moderation, courage, justice, and prudence are to be viewed as cardinal virtues turns upon their specific relations with what he terms conditions or modes of virtuous action. It is these

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281 This approach is found in many of Aquinas’s sources, including Cicero, Macrobius, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great.
282 Müller, “In War and Peace,” 77–90. Müller provides a very good discussion of how Albert and Aquinas aim at a reconciliation of the Aristotelian idea of distinct character virtues with the Stoic understanding of the cardinal virtues.
relations that provide him with a principle for how to identify a cardinal virtue. Aquinas states that the cardinal virtues “have a foremost claim to praise on account of one of those things that are requisite for the notion of virtue in general” (ST II.II.141.7)\(^{283}\) The idea being that a cardinal virtue has a primary or principal claim to something that all virtuous actions need to display. The method of determining whether a virtue is a cardinal virtue involves three distinct steps in this regard, namely (1) identifying a mode/condition of virtue; (2) identifying the virtues that are particularly concerned with that mode; and (3) identifying the virtue that expresses that mode/condition principally. The virtue so identified is a cardinal virtue.

Aquinas’s analysis of courage provides an example that facilitates an understanding of this account.

Now one of the general modes of virtue is firmness of mind, because “a firm standing is necessary in every virtue,” according to NE II. And this is chiefly praised in those virtues that tend to something difficult, in which it is most difficult to preserve firmness. Therefore, the more difficult it is to stand firm in something arduous, the more principal is the virtue which makes the mind firm in that matter (ST II.II.129.5c).\(^{284}\)

The first step of Aquinas’s analysis is thus to identify a certain mode or condition of virtue. In the example at hand, he argues that every act of character virtue needs to be firm, which indicates that firmness is one such mode/condition. The identification of a given mode/condition makes it possible to recognize the existence of a group of virtues that concern that mode in particular. The second step involves identifying the virtues that specifically concern a given mode, which in this case are those that concern what is difficult, when it is particularly praiseworthy to stand firm and not abandon what one is supposed to do. Aquinas states that the conditions for virtue “are needed for every virtuous action, although each of them may have a certain priority when particular types of matter or action are in question” (QDVirt. 5.1c).\(^{285}\) Aquinas thus maintains there is a group of virtues that specifically concern firmness.

The third step and final step involves identifying the virtue that is principal within the given group of virtues, which in this example involves when it is the most difficult to stand firm. Aquinas argues that this is associated with

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\(^{283}\)...quae principalius laudatur ex aliquo eorum quae communiter requiruntur ad rationem virtutis.

\(^{284}\)Inter alios autem generales modos virtutis unus est firmitas animi, quia firmiter se habere requiritur in omni virtute, ut dicitur in II Ethic. Praecipue tamen hoc laudatur in virtutibus quae in aliqual arduum tendunt, in quibus difficillimum est firmitatem servare. Et ideo quanto difficilior est in aliquote arduo firmiter se habere, tanto principalior est virtus quae circa illud firmitatem praestat animo.

\(^{285}\)...in omnibus virtuosis actibus requiruntur; singula tamen horum principalitatem quamdam habent in specialibus quibusdam materiis et actibus.
one’s life being at risk, and that courage concerns this sort of difficulty. For instance, a soldier is courageous when he does not abandon his post when the enemy charges and there is a considerable risk to his life. Fearing death is perhaps the most difficult thing to face, and it is thus the most praiseworthy thing to overcome as well. Consequently, Aquinas maintains that courage as a distinct dispositional state is a cardinal virtue because of the specific relation it has to the mode/condition of firmness.

This three-step method provides a way in which to argue that the traditional four virtues should all be regarded as cardinal virtues because they are principal virtues within their respective groups of virtues. From Aquinas’s perspective, there are four cardinal virtues because there are four modes of virtue, and the other virtues within each corresponding group are secondary to the cardinal virtues.

It should be evident at this point that Aquinas intends to define the relations between the cardinal and secondary virtues in a specific manner. He further utilizes a type of mereological analysis to explain his view. It should be noted that he does not regard the secondary virtues as parts of the cardinal virtues in the sense of being species of a genus – secondary virtues are not part of what Aquinas refers to as a subjective whole. He instead proposes that the secondary virtues are what he terms potential parts, comparing this to how a part of the soul only expresses a part of what the soul as a whole can do. He states that

The potential parts of a virtue are the virtues connected with it, which are directed to certain secondary acts or matters, not having, as it were (quasi), the whole power of the principal virtue (ST II.II.48.1c).\footnote{Partes autem potentiales alicuius virtutis dicuntur virtutes adiunctae quae ordinantur ad aliquos secundarios actus vel materias, quasi non habentes totam potentiam principalis virtutis.}

Courage is a whole in the sense that it possesses the full power of firmness because the most difficult thing to do is stand firm in the face of death, while standing firm in relation to any other difficulty does not display the full power of the principal virtue. That is to say that courageous acts express firmness to the greatest extent possible. I take this to be most explicit formulation that Aquinas provides of what a cardinal virtue is – it is a virtue that expresses a mode or common condition of virtue to the greatest extent possible.

Terence Irwin has identified a problem concerning how cardinal virtues obtain their status as principal virtues. He correctly observes that Aquinas at certain times refers to cardinal virtues as being the most difficult in their respective group, while at others he identifies them in reference to their importance. For example, while justice is not necessarily the most difficult

\footnote{ST II.II.123.4. For a discussion of why Aquinas holds this view of courage, see Müller, “In War and Peace.”}

\footnote{For an overview of the medieval discussion of mereology, see Arlig, “Medieval Mereology.”}
virtue, it nevertheless is the most important virtue concerned with the mode or condition of correctness (rectitudo) – it is not necessarily more difficult to be just than to be generous.\(^{289}\) This problem can be avoided, however, if we view cardinal virtues as expressing a common notion to the greatest extent possible, whereby being the most difficult among a given group does not by itself make something a cardinal virtue. For instance, that which is most difficult in the case of courage and moderation indicates which virtue expresses the common mode/condition to the highest degree, while that which is most difficult in the case of justice is less important for our understanding of the virtues than capturing the mode of correctness. Even if justice is less difficult than generosity, that does not undermine the fact that justice, and not generosity, is a cardinal virtue insofar as justice expresses correctness to the greatest degree.

With this analysis in mind, I will now turn to the possible conflict between Aquinas’s account of the cardinal virtues and *Strong Global Connection*.

### IV.2 Reasons for *Cardinal Connection*

The challenge that Kent has raised concerns the foundational status that Aquinas ascribes to the cardinal virtues, whereby he apparently endorses what may be termed *Cardinal Connection*. This thesis consists of two claims: (1) a person needs all the cardinal virtues to possess any cardinal virtue, and (2) a person needs all the cardinal virtues to possess non-cardinal character virtues.

The metaphor of the cardinal virtues as comprising a foundation for the other virtues would seem to suggest that a person can acquire the cardinal virtues without acquiring secondary virtues. Much in the same way as one first lays the foundation of a house and afterwards constructs the other parts of the house, one would first acquire the cardinal virtues and then the other character virtues. This implies that we can possess the cardinal virtues before acquiring the virtues that depend on them. If this description is accurate, it should trouble anyone who wishes to ascribe *Strong Global Connection* to Aquinas.

Kent has identified two more specific reasons for maintaining that Aquinas’s view of the cardinal virtues undermines his commitment to *Strong Global Connection*. The first centers on an explicit example of an asymmetrical relation between principal and secondary virtues, whereby Aquinas argues that generosity depends upon justice, while justice does not depend upon generosity. I term this the *asymmetry problem*. The second issue centers on the secondary status of non-cardinal virtues, whereby that it cannot be necessary to possess secondary virtues, which are parts of the cardinal virtues, in order to possess any principal virtue. I will refer to this as the

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\(^{289}\) Irwin, “Do Virtues Conflict?,” 70.
secondary status problem. I will here focus on these two issues and address them in turn.

IV.2.1 The asymmetry problem

Aquinas maintains that there is an asymmetry between justice and generosity such that a person needs to know that stealing cannot be the right means for acquiring valuables that they wish to give to others in an effort to be generous. Stated otherwise, one needs to take into consideration the demands of justice in order to be generous. Moreover, part of what makes an act generous is that a person gives their own possessions to another when not obligated (obligatus) to do so. Justice is thus the foundation of generosity, and the virtue of justice participates in an act of generosity insofar as a generous act is based upon an understanding of what one is allowed to give. Consequently, Aquinas does not accept that justice is dependent upon generosity, and he views generosity as an adornment to justice – one can thus possess justice without generosity.291

Aquinas explicitly observes in this respect that

The act of generosity needs to be founded on an act of justice, for “a man is not generous in giving, unless he gives of his own” (Politics II.3). Hence there could be no generosity apart from justice, which discerns between one’s own and not one’s own, whereas justice can be without generosity. Hence justice is simply greater than generosity, as being more universal, and as being its foundation: while generosity is greater relatively since it is an ornament and an addition to justice (ST I.II.66.4.ad1).292

This passage would seem to indicate that there may be at least one exception to Strong Global Connection.

There is another way, however, in which to understand the asymmetrical relationship between justice and generosity. For example, we can conceive of this relationship as reflecting the fact that, in order to act generously, one has to use the virtue of justice, and not the reverse. There is also a sense in which every generous act requires a just act insofar as a person can only be generous with what rightly belongs to them. But it is not necessary for an act of justice to be generous – it is not generous to pay back one’s debt. We can thus perform a just act without performing a generous act, but the converse is not possible. Nevertheless, Aquinas’s commitment to such a direct asymmetrical relation

290 ST II.II.117.5.
292 ...actus liberalitatis oportet quod fundetur super actum iustitiae, non enim esset liberalis datio, si non de proprio daret, ut in II Polit. dicitur. Unde liberalitas sine iustitia esse non posset, quae secernit suum a non suo. Iustitia autem potest esse sine liberalitate. Unde iustitia simpliciter est maior liberalitate, tanquam communior, et fundamentum ipsius, liberalitas autem est secundum quid maior, cum sit quidam ornatus iustitiae, et complementum eius.
between these two acts of virtue does not prevent justice from being indirectly connected with generosity through its dependence on prudence.

We may then conclude that this sort of asymmetry does not provide conclusive evidence for *Cardinal Connection*. We have seen that Aquinas’s argument for *Strong Global Connection* resides upon the particular role of prudence in connecting the character virtues, not upon how individual character virtues directly relate to each other. We should also recognize that Aquinas does not need to be committed to the idea that all virtues must be directly present in every virtuous act. He is instead committed to the idea that every moral failure is a failure of prudence, and that a failure in any character virtue is extended through prudence to all the character virtues.

More conclusive evidence for *Cardinal Connection* would seem to be associated with Aquinas’s idea that non-cardinal virtues are secondary virtues directly.

IV.2.2 The secondary status problem

Kent’s second reason for *Cardinal Connection* is based upon Aquinas’s description of the non-cardinal virtues as potential parts of the cardinal virtues—she states that Aquinas “demotes most moral virtues discussed by Aristotle to the secondary status that might be annexed to the cardinals.” She also argues that regarding secondary virtues as potential parts of the cardinal virtues entails that the character virtues are only possibly annexed to their respective cardinal virtue. This would be a conclusive argument in support of *Cardinal Connection* insofar as the cardinal virtues could then be acquired independently of the non-cardinal virtues. However, does Aquinas’s description of the non-cardinal virtues as annexed virtues and potential parts of the cardinal virtues in fact support such a reading?

As noted above, Aquinas maintains that the cardinal virtues acquire their status as principal virtues because they express a mode or common condition of virtue among a given group of virtues to the greatest extent possible. Being a cardinal virtue thus involves having a particularly close relationship to something that the corresponding group of character virtues have in common. Secondary virtues are annexed to principal virtues in the sense that they express a common mode or condition in a more limited way, and they may thus be described as potential parts of the cardinal virtues. But if we conceive of cardinal virtues along these lines, we cannot directly infer that a principal virtue cannot depend on secondary virtues. There is no direct impossibility that a principal virtue in this sense cannot depend on secondary virtues in this sense.

The question we instead need to ask is whether it is part of the definition of a principal virtue that it cannot depend upon a secondary virtue. I believe

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there is textual support for the view that Aquinas does not accept that this is the case. He at times describes prudence as the primary virtue, which would seem to imply that all character virtues are secondary in a certain sense to prudence,294 we have seen in the previous chapter that he does not maintain that one can possess prudence without possessing at least some other character virtues. This suggests that the notion of being a principal virtue does not necessarily entail that it does not depend on other virtues.

There are also other examples which suggest that Aquinas is not committed to the position that the principal virtues can be acquired without possessing secondary virtues as well. Two prominent issues concern the need for good deliberation in respect to prudence and the need for good temper in respect to justice. Regarding the first of these, Aquinas maintains that good deliberation (euboulia) is a secondary virtue annexed to prudence. He writes that

Nevertheless, these have certain proximate ends of their own, the end of counsel being the discovery of what has to be done, and the end of judgment, certainty. Hence this proves not that good deliberation (euboulia) is not a distinct virtue from prudence, but that it is subordinate thereto, as a secondary to a principal virtue (ST II.II.51.2.ad2).295

Aquinas thus maintains that good deliberation is a separate and distinct virtue, and that prudence is the principal virtue in this case because it commands one to action.296 He argues that a person deliberates because they are unsure about what they should do, adding that good deliberation would be in vain if it did not lead to action.297 But while this indicates that good deliberation is a secondary virtue that is a potential part of prudence, it apparently does not entail that it is merely possible for deliberation to be annexed to prudence insofar as deliberation is crucial in many cases for obtaining right reason in action. A failure in deliberation would then result in a failure in prudence and, correspondingly, in the other cardinal virtues as well. If this point is correct, then it does not follow from the fact that good deliberation is a secondary virtue that prudence can be obtained independently of it and, consequently, the other character virtues. This supports the position that Aquinas does not believe that the notion of principal virtue entails that such virtues can be possessed without secondary virtues.

In respect to the second point, Aquinas appears to be committed to the view that justice is reliant upon good temper. He maintains that controlling one’s anger is central to obtaining and maintaining justice, arguing that “when

294 III Sent. 3.33.2.5. See also ST I.II.61.2.ad1.
295 Qui tamen habent quosdam proximos fines, consilium quidem inventionem eorum quae sunt agenda; iudicium autem certitudinem. Unde ex hoc non sequitur quod eubulia et prudentia non sint diversae virtutes, sed quod eubulia ordinetur ad prudentiam sicut virtus secundaria ad principalem.
296 ST II.II.47.8.
297 ST II.II.51.2.
through anger one man strikes another, justice is destroyed in the undue blow; while good temper is destroyed by the unrestrained anger” (*ST* I.II.60.2c).

This indicates that Aquinas does not believe that one can possess justice without also possessing a virtue that moderates anger – one needs the virtue of good temper in order to be just. Moreover, although Aquinas regards good temper as a non-cardinal virtue that is annexed to moderation, he also remarks that good temper is a virtue that is needed in every life, not only in some. The clearest example of a virtue that Aquinas believes is needed in only some lives is magnanimity, which is the virtue concerned with how large sums of money are used. Good temper is different from magnanimity in this sense.

From Aquinas’s perspective, all the cardinal virtues are needed in all lives, but many of the secondary virtues are also needed in all lives. This is the case with the virtue of generosity, for example, which is needed even if one does not have many resources.

**IV.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the relationship between connection of the character virtues and Aquinas’s theory of the cardinal virtues. I have argued that Aquinas’s recognition of an asymmetrical relation between justice and generosity does not provide a conclusive reason for *Cardinal Connection*. I have also addressed how the manner in which Aquinas regards non-cardinal virtues as secondary virtues and potential parts of the cardinal virtues does not mean that the latter cannot rely upon secondary virtues. Examples in this regard are the reliance of prudence upon good deliberation, and of justice, upon good temper. If we take Aquinas’s notion of the cardinal virtues as meaning that such virtues express a common mode or condition of virtue to the greatest possible extent, we can deflect the challenge presented by Aquinas’s account of cardinal virtues to the view that Aquinas supports *Strong Global Connection*. On this reading, Aquinas does not sharply separate the cardinal virtues from other virtues in his analysis of the connection of the virtues.

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298 *...cum propter iram aliquis alium percutit, in ipsa percussione indebita corrumpitur iustitia, in immoderantia vero iarae corrumpituir mansuetudo.*
299 *ST* II.II.163.1.
300 *QDVirt.* 5.2.ad9.
301 *ST* II.II.129.2. For a discussion of Aquinas’s account, see Hoffmann, “Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Magnanimity.”
Chapter V: Essential Dependence and the Unity of Prudence

Introduction

In the previous chapters we have explored how Aquinas argues that we cannot possess one character virtue without the others as well. We will now turn our attention to Godfrey, who presents one of the most detailed defenses of the connection of the virtues in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Godfrey’s discussion is significant for two main reasons. First, he provides a well-developed framework for understanding what is necessary for supporting the claim that one cannot possess a given character virtue without possessing another. In this regard, he presents Aristotle’s argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.12-13 as one of four possible ways in which to account for the connection of the virtues. Godfrey emphasizes that Aristotle’s argumentation holds only in respect to one specific account of the nature of the character virtues and prudence, explicitly affirming that the connection of the character virtues resides upon the essential interdependence that obtains between them and prudence.

Second, Godfrey provides us with one of the first explicit responses to the major challenge to the Aristotelian approach presented by Peter Olivi’s influential critical discussion of Aristotle’s argument. Olivi shows that prudence itself needs to be unified in order for Aristotle’s position to be defensible. The problem in this respect is that if there are as many types of prudence as there are character virtues, then Aristotle in fact demonstrates nothing more that in order to have a given character virtue, one needs the corresponding type of prudence. We can term this problem the *Many Kinds of Prudence Challenge*. I argue that it is the Aristotelians who must then explain why it is not possible in principle to know what is required by courage, for example, without also knowing what is required by the other character virtues.

Godfrey develops a novel account of prudence in responding to the *Many Kinds of Prudence Challenge*, opting for a model in which prudence as a

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302 Godfrey’s account has received little scholarly attention apart from Oden Lottin’s broad overview (*Psychologie et morale*, IV, 576–596).

303 Godfrey’s account plays a central role in the late medieval discussions of virtue because he is one of the main interlocutors in respect to Scotus’ influential account. See Dumont, “A Note on Thomas Wylton and Ripoll 95,” 117–123.
whole has two functions, namely, taking into consideration both what the good is for each character virtue separately, and what the good is if one relates the various character virtues to each other. In accordance with this reading, Godfrey maintains a holistic conception of character virtue whereby it is constitutive of any given character virtue that it stand in a correct relation with all the others. For example, a prudent person must be able to weigh the various character virtues and be able to judge what must be done when all things are taken into consideration. I will argue that this approach has a number of advantages over explaining the unity of prudence in terms of happiness as the final end, as Irwin proposes.\textsuperscript{304}

The present chapter consists of four main sections. First, I examine the different types of explanations for the connection of the virtues that Godfrey outlines. In the second section, I discuss the problem of a lack of unity in prudence, focusing on how Olivi develops his objection and Godfrey understands the challenge. I then explore Godfrey’s solution and his account of why prudence must be a unified virtue, developing what I term the relational reading of his position. In the fourth section, I argue that the notion of happiness plays no part in the unity of prudence from Godfrey’s perspective.

V.1. Connection of the Character Virtues

Godfrey discusses the connection of the character virtues in a number of texts, first addressing the issue in Quodlibet II.11,\textsuperscript{305} where he stays very close to Aquinas’s reading of Aristotle’s argument. Godfrey develops his analysis considerably further in such in number of Disputed Questions.\textsuperscript{306} I will here focus on his more developed account in these later works, which in many ways are more clear and straightforward than Aquinas’ discussion. He is a significant figure in the movement within in scholastic philosophy that was increasingly interested in the connection of the virtues. In my reading, he and Aquinas adopt similar approaches to these matters, although it should be noted that his discussion proceeds in greater depth and detail. However, Godfrey does not mention the Patristic Argument, nor does he invoke the cardinal virtues.\textsuperscript{307}

\textsuperscript{304} Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided,” 199ff.  
\textsuperscript{305} Quodl. II.11 (PB.2 147-51) dates from Easter 1286 (Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines, xxvii).  
\textsuperscript{306} QO III; QO IV; QO V. I take all these Disputed Questions to post-date Quodlibet II.11. The Disputed Questions probably date from 1286–1290 (Lottin, Psychologie et morale, III, 502). Godfrey also discusses the connection of virtues in QO XIX, where he primarily addresses the issue of whether one can acquire virtue without charity.  
\textsuperscript{307} Godfrey does not discuss the equality of the virtues in difference from Aquinas (ST I.II.66.2, QDVirt. 5.3). But I take it that Godfrey’s view in general would imply that virtues are equal in the way Aquinas thinks they are.
The general account of the relations between the virtues developed in chapter III is relevant to Godfrey’s discussion. Both Godfrey and Aquinas are interested in whether, in order to possess a given virtue perfectly, we need to have another character virtue as well. For example, is it possible to acquire courage perfectly without possessing moderation? I will here continue to use the term connection in a technical sense, whereby two things are connected if the one cannot exist without the other. Two character virtues are then connected if one cannot acquire one character virtue without possessing the other as well.

I have previously argued that two key points are involved in gaining an understanding of the late medieval debate concerning the connection of the character virtues. First, does the connection of the character virtues pertain to all the character virtues, or only some? This issue requires that we distinguish between global and local connection. Second, we need to determine whether acquiring a given character virtue perfectly demands that one also possess another virtue perfectly, or only to some extent. We thus need to differentiate between strong and weak connection. I will focus in this respect on what may explain Strong Global Connection, as I did in the previous chapter.

Godfrey provides us with a systematic approach to the connection of the virtues as well as a way in which to organize the various arguments for how they may be connected. He also presents us with a more detailed framework than that is found in Aquinas, for example, as he outlines four possible ways in which a given character virtue may be connected with another. He views Aristotle’s argument in *NE* VI.12–13 as only one such argument, and his framework permits us to see more clearly how he views the nature of that argument. It is significant that Godfrey does not consider Aristotle’s argument to comprise a psychological thesis concerning how we maintain different virtues over time, but rather regards it as based upon the nature of the character virtues and prudence. We will see that Godfrey takes Aristotle’s argument as residing upon a particular account of moral understanding and a specific notion of the nature of character virtues.

V.1.1. Godfrey’s Four Possible Explanations of the Connection of the Character Virtues

In an effort to identify the types of relations that can explain connection of the virtues, he presents us with the following four-fold outline of the possible ways in which character virtues may be connected. It comprises four ways in which to explain why one cannot have a given character virtue without possessing others as well. This framework distinguishes two basic ways in

\[\text{QO V.75–80.}\]

\[\text{QO V.70–75.}\]
which to account for connection, with two possible alternatives for each of these two types. He presents us with this framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Character virtues are connected among themselves (inter se)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1A) Essentially (essentialiter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Character virtues are connected through a third (in tertio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2A) Virtually (virtualiter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In respect to the first type of explanation (connection *inter se*), Godfrey argues that the connection of the character virtues either resides upon shared essential relations (1A), or that the character virtues are mutually supportive (1B). In respect to the first of these alternatives, if the definition of a given character virtue involves a non-eliminative reference to another, then whenever one can be said to possess the one, one can also be said to possess the other. Regarding the second (1B), one may fail in respect to a given character virtue if one does not possess another that supports it.

Godfrey also identifies two distinct alternatives of the second type of explanation (connection *in tertio*), arguing that both charity (2A) and prudence (2B) may explain why we cannot have a given character virtue without also having another.

Prudence connects the character virtues insofar as it is an element of any proper account of any character virtue that all character virtues are dependent upon prudence. Because of this dependence it is impossible to have one character virtue without having another. Godfrey also maintains that the dependence of the character virtues upon charity could explain connection in that we need all of the character virtues in order to have charity. However, this type of connection does not reside upon the nature of the character virtues themselves, but rather is a consequence of God needing to give us all of the character virtues if God wants us to possess charity. However, this alternative explanation does not reside upon the nature of the character virtues themselves, but rather upon what is required for possessing charity.

Godfrey’s framework illustrates that he has a developed understanding of the possible arguments for the connection of the character virtues. The framework in question, which is his own, raises many of central themes that have already been addressed to this point in the present discussion. For example, Godfrey seeks to avoid any explanation of the connection of the character virtues that undermines their plurality. It is also necessary to determine whether the mere fact that failure in one character virtue leads to failure in another is sufficient to explain *Strong Global Connection*.

Godfrey is most interested in Aristotle’s preferred explanation (2B). He rejects (1A), and he maintains that although (1B) proves that the character
virtues are connected, it does not prove what I have termed *strong connection*. Godfrey instead takes it as meaning that in order to possess any given character virtue, we need to possess at least one other to some extent. Moreover, if we wish to demonstrate *Strong Global Connection*, it will never be sufficient to focus on how different virtues support each other. In addition, although Godfrey accepts that both (2A) and (2B) prove *Strong Global Connection*, (2A) does not rely upon a specific conception of the character virtues themselves, but rather upon God granting us charity. While (2A) holds true on any account of the character virtues, (2B) instead relies upon a specific account of their nature.

We will now look more closely at Godfrey’s understanding of Aristotle’s argument. Why does Godfrey think that the character virtues are connected through prudence? How is this argument supposed to work?

### V.2. The Dependence Argument

Godfrey follows the basic model we explored in chapter III,\(^{310}\) whereby prudence is portrayed as unique among the intellectual virtues because it is closely related to the character virtues.\(^{311}\) Godfrey’s understanding of the relation between prudence and the character virtues in many ways follows Aquinas as we have presented him, which entails that the framework we developed for Aquinas is also applicable to Godfrey. Insofar as the dependence relation between prudence and the character virtues serves to ground *Strong Global Connection*, I will continue to refer to this specific argument for *Strong Global Connection* as the Dependence Argument, which may be stated as follows:

- **(P1)** If one has a character virtue perfectly, one has prudence perfectly because all character virtues are essentially dependent on prudence.
- **(P2)** If one has prudence perfectly, one has all the character virtues perfectly because prudence is essentially dependent on all the character virtues.
- **(Con1)** If one has one character virtue perfectly, then one has all the character virtues perfectly.

Godfrey position is that the argument in *NE VI* establishes that the character virtues are connected indirectly through the dependence that obtains between

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\(^{310}\) As noted previously, my understanding of Aquinas on this point is influenced by how Godfrey views this issue.

\(^{311}\) Godfrey discusses how we ought to distinguish between the various intellectual virtues in detail in *Qo II* (*PB*.14 94-118). I will address the difference between prudence and moral science in Chapter VII.
them and prudence, stating explicitly that this constitutes a form of essential
dependence. For Godfrey, the connection between the character virtues as
indirect because it is not an element of the essence of any given character
virtue to be connected to any other character virtue. This is an important
point in that he seeks to retain the idea that the character virtues are distinct
from each other, and that acting courageously, for example, is not same thing
as acting moderately.

In respect to how the relation between prudence and the character virtues
may ground *Strong Global Connection*, Godfrey follows Aquinas in arguing
that the character virtues provide inclinations towards good ends that are, in
turn, specified by prudence. A perfectly virtuous person will be inclined
towards specific ends and will have the intellectual ability to determine which
actions are conducive to attaining such ends. Moreover, one cannot act
virtuously if one does not have both the inclination (*inclinatio*) towards these
ends, and the intellectual ability to see what is conducive to attaining them.

The central idea in this approach is that the character virtues entail
inclinations towards good ends, and that prudential reasoning starts from such
inclinations towards these ends. Godfrey regards this as a matter of
acquiring formed or fixed inclinations towards good ends. That is to say that
there is no prudential reasoning in the strict sense without such inclinations
towards good ends, which are acquired through possessing character
virtues. In addition, a virtuous person is not only inclined towards good ends,
but also acts correctly upon such inclinations – which is why the character
virtues are essentially dependent upon prudence. A person who is perfectly
virtuous thus possesses both good inclinations and the prudential ability to
choose actions that are conducive to attaining the ends in question.

Godfrey views the development towards perfect virtue as involving three
steps, with the character virtues being connected on the third level. The first
step consists of the general inclination to do good, such as obey God, do what
is honorable, and so forth. However, such general inclinations are not
sufficient for being a good person. The second level consists in having specific
inclinations, which is the level that Aristotle terms the natural virtues. Godfrey

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312 *OQ* V.210–216.
313 *OQ* IV.160–200.
314 *NE* 1144a5-a20 Why one needs the character virtues to have good ends is a matter of con-
siderable disagreement within Aristotelian scholarship. For an excellent discussion of this de-
bate, see Moss, “Virtue Makes the Goal Right: Virtue and Phronesis in Aristotle’s Ethics.”
315 *OQ* IV.180–185.
316 There is no practical reasoning in the true sense without a motivation for action, and in this
regard, Godfrey draws a distinction between practical reasoning and other forms of practical
thought, which are merely concerned with human actions. For example, practical science in the
sense of moral theory concerns human actions, but it requires no motivation. Central to our
discussion is the notion that practical science involves no character virtue and requires no in-
clination towards any end. See *OQ* IV.112–117.
maintains that this level can be attained both by natural inclination, and by custom (assufactione) and good education (bena educatione). A person on this level of virtue not only aims to obey God or live honorably, but also has an inclination to be just and brave, for example. However, they do not have a more specific inclination about what this entails since their inclinations towards good ends remain unformed (informalis). Godfrey associates the notion of a non-formed inclination with the Aristotelian idea that virtuous action must be done in the right circumstances (ubi), at the right time (quando), and in the right way (quantum). That is to say that while this level entails a willingness to act in a virtuous manner, one’s actions will not accord with the mean insofar as their inclinations toward good ends are not yet fully and properly formed.

On the third level of moral development, which comprises actual virtue, we have good inclinations upon which we can act appropriately in any given situation. Acquiring properly formed inclinations means both being inclined towards courageous actions, for example, and having inclinations upon which one can act in a correct way and in the right situations, which is to say that one has properly formed good inclinations as well as the ability to discern where, when, and how one should act to attain good ends. Having particular ends is at least one element of the explanation for why good actions come easily to a virtuous person. Not only does a virtuous person thus have inclinations to act well (to give generously, moderately, justly, and so forth), but also more particular ends that lead to acting in certain ways and in certain circumstances.

Godfrey proposes that the explanation for Strong Global Connection is grounded upon the fact that all character virtues stand in a certain relation to prudence. He describes this in terms of the character virtues being both indirectly connected and, in a sense, accidentally connected as well (per acciden). The latter is a somewhat unfortunate choice of terminology since the Dependence Argument, if it holds, implies that the virtues are necessarily connected. Why would Godfrey then state that connection is accidental? My position is that we should read this as a way of emphasizing that the character virtues are not essentially connected (alternative 1A above) insofar as nothing in the character virtues themselves necessitates this – they are connected because they all are essentially dependent upon prudence. Stated otherwise,

318 QO IV.585: “ubi oportet, et quando et quantum et sic de aliis secundum quad recta ratio dictat.” Such conditions were referred to in the medieval discussion as the circumstances of the act (e.g., ST I.11.7.3), which Godfrey addresses in QO XVII. For a general discussion of circumstances, see Gründel, Die Lehre von den Umständen, and Osborne, Human Actions, 109–184.
319 Godfrey reasonably connects Aristotle’s discussion of the mean in NE II.7 with his analysis of a good disposition without prudence in NE VI.12.
320 Godfrey here makes use of the distinction between universal and particular ends that was developed by Aquinas in ST I.11.58.5.
321 Quodl. II.11 (PB.2 147).
the connection between the character virtues is accidental in the sense that it depends upon on the essential relation they all have to prudence, not because of a common essence they share.

This essentialist framework helps Godfrey affirm *Strong Global Connection* while also upholding the idea that there is a plurality of character virtues that are distinct from each other. Godfrey maintains that prudence and the character virtues are dependent upon each other for what they are in a way that is not equivalent to the idea that the character virtues share a common essence. Even if one cannot possess the character virtues in isolation from each other, Godfrey provides a framework that shows how it is possible to retain their distinctness – they are directly connected, but they do not make each other into what they are. For example, courage does not make moderation into a virtue, and moderation does not figure in the definition of courage – each has its own separate essence.\(^{322}\) It is rather prudence that makes the character virtues into what they are, and the character virtues make prudence into what it is. So defined, the character virtues thereby always contain a reference to prudence, and conversely.

One may argue that if all the character virtues shared a single essence, then it is not possible to possess any one of them without possessing all the others – if the character virtues share an essence, we cannot say that a given person is just without the same person also being courageous, as an example. From Godfrey’s perspective, the definition of any given character virtue thereby entails a non-eliminative reference to all the others. An example of (1A) is the Socratic idea that there is in fact no plurality of character virtues, and that all the virtues are simply knowledge, from which it would follow that the different names for character virtues are merely different names for one and the same thing. Godfrey and Aquinas both argue that it would in fact not be possible for there to be different character virtues if they all shared an essence.\(^{323}\)

In summary, Godfrey argues that the mutual dependence between prudence and all the character virtues explains *Strong Global Connection*, viewing the Dependence Argument as one of four possible arguments in this regard. I will now address how the remaining two explanations (1B and 2A) contrast with the Dependence Argument.

V.2.2. Supportive Connection

Godfrey argues that the supportive connection of the character virtues (1B) follows from the fact that they provide a certain support for each other, and,

\(^{322}\) Godfrey also uses the term what-ness (*quiddiate*) in respect to the individual character virtues (*QQ* XIX.114).

\(^{323}\) *QQ* V.75–80.
moreover, that this is a form of connection *inter se*.\(^{324}\) That is to say that the various character virtues provide support to each other in the sense that possessing one facilitates possessing the others as well, such as how possessing moderation makes it easier to possess generosity.\(^{325}\) Many have thought that Aristotle’s argument for *Strong Global Connection* was based upon the view that lacking a given character virtue leads to failure regarding another,\(^{326}\) whereby it would not be possible to fully possess any of the character virtues if one did not possess them all. Godfrey, however, views this to be an argument that is distinct from Aristotle’s position in *NE VI*.

Godfrey presents the example of how moderation supports generosity, arguing that if one is not moderate, one can fail upon occasion in being generous. This would be the case, for instance, when one was led to spend money on pleasurable things because of strong desires and was consequently unable to help others. Although gaining an understanding of how and to what degree the character virtues rely upon each other is an important topic in its own right, Godfrey views it as a separate issue from accounting for the essential dependence between the character virtues and prudence,\(^{327}\) maintaining that the notion of character virtues supporting each other cannot be an element of Aristotle’s original argument because of the distinction between particular and universal prudence.\(^{328}\) He thus considers a failure of generosity due to a lack of moderation to be an instance of the corruption of a particular form of prudence, which is to say that the latter was corrupted by one’s strong desires for pleasure – Godfrey argues that the only thing corrupted in this case is a particular form of prudence specifically related to generosity. Consequently, we cannot infer from a failure in respect to one character virtue that a person lacks prudence as a whole.

Godfrey states that character virtues which concern similar things tend to support each other to a greater degree and are thus connected in the supportive sense.\(^{329}\) This indicates that Godfrey does not regard explanation (IB) as a basis for *Strong Global Connection*. Instead, the amount of supportive connection would vary in degree depending on the virtues in question. This matters for our general understanding of the connection of the character virtues insofar as an argument that focuses upon how lacking one virtue leads to the lack of another can demonstrate no more than that in order to have a given character virtue perfectly, we need another character virtue to some

\(^{324}\) *QO* V.70–75.  
\(^{325}\) *QO* V.100–110.  
\(^{326}\) For this reading of Aristotle, see Gottlieb, “Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues.”  
\(^{327}\) *QO* V.80–125.  
\(^{328}\) Henry of Ghent was the first to use this distinction in respect to the connection of the virtues (*Quodlibet* V.17, 190rG-vG).  
\(^{329}\) *QO* V.139-40
Mutual support thus explains nothing more than *Weak Global Connection*.

It may well be an important question in its own right to provide a precise account of how given virtues support each other and to what extent human psychology is integrated. In contrast, the *Dependence Argument* as Godfrey presents it resides upon a specific account of the nature of the character virtues and prudence. Godfrey also maintains that the *Dependence Argument* turns upon a particular account of moral understanding such that it is not possible to understand what is required by a given character virtue if one does not understand what is required by all.

We will now turn our attention to Godfrey’s views concerning the difference between prudence and charity in relation to the connection of the virtues.

**V.2.3 Virtual Connection**

Godfrey argues that the character virtues may be connected *in tertio* in respect to both prudence and charity, stating that this form of connection is virtual (virtualiter) rather than essential in nature. The reason why this form of connection is virtual in respect to charity (2A) is that it follows from the fact that we need all the character virtues in order to love God completely, which is a requirement for charity, and to serve God, which is what charity consists of. In addition, we need all the character virtues in order to please (placere) God, and it is in this sense that charity inclines us to act virtuously in respect to every character virtue. That is to say that charity provides us with a certain type of end – loving and serving God – which requires that we possess all the character virtues.

More specifically, this type of argumentation supports the weaker thesis that one cannot have a given virtue without having another virtue to some degree, which is to say that similar character virtues tend to form a cluster. Godfrey does not accept the notion of infused character virtues (QO XI.516-519; QO XIX.114–122) and thereby diverges from Aquinas’ account (ST I.II.63.3; QDVirt 1.10). He thus maintains that acquired virtues obtain a new aim when one receives infused charity, modelling his account of the relation between charity and the character virtues upon the relation between the character virtues and general justice. For example, one follows general justice when acting in accordance with the common good (QO XIX.114-116), while justice acquires a different nature when a virtuous person acts with God as an end. Justice in these two instances thus has two distinct aims. The disagreement between Aquinas and Godfrey on this point turns upon whether character virtues with different ends constitute different species of character virtue. For a discussion of Godfrey’s account of justice, see Kempshall, *The Common Good*, 204-235, and Kent, “Justice, Passion, and Another’s Good.”

To my knowledge, Godfrey is the first to argue that character virtues can be virtually connected through charity.

There is the further question concerning whether Godfrey maintains that the other theological virtues essentially depend on charity. However, he does not discuss the issue of the connection of the theological virtues.

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334 QO V.186-204
I take this to mean that Godfrey wishes to emphasize that loving God requires that we possess all the character virtues, even though this tells us nothing about the nature of the character virtues themselves. Furthermore, while the character virtues could be virtually connected in respect to almost any notion of character virtue, the Dependence Argument instead relies upon the specific idea that prudence and the character virtues are integrated (2B).

We will now examine one of the central challenges to the Dependence Argument that was developed in the thirteenth century by Peter Olivi, namely, the argument that prudence is not unified, but is rather divisible into types of prudence specific to each of the character virtues. Since the Dependence Argument – including Aristotle’s position – resides upon the premise that prudence is a unified and indivisible virtue, it would not be valid if prudence were divisible. Olivi was the first to utilize the notion of particular prudence in an effort to demonstrate that prudence as a whole is not unified and thereby disprove Aristotle’s argument.

V.3. The Many Kinds of Prudence Challenge

We have seen in chapter III the Dependence Argument relies upon the assumption that prudence has a certain unity and cannot be divisible. At the end of the thirteenth century, Olivi explicitly used the idea of particular forms of prudence to formulate an objection to the Dependence Argument. Furthermore, insofar as both Duns Scotus and William Ockham follow Olivi in postulating that there is a particular prudence for every character virtue, they consequently reject the view that the character virtues are connected in tertio in respect to a unified prudence. I here focus on Olivi’s discussion in this regard because it forms an important background to Godfrey’s position, not only being a possible source for his discussion, but also clearly highlighting the specific problem that he seeks to resolve.

Olivi points to Aristotle’s argument as one possible explanation for the connection of the character virtues, and he recapitulates it faithfully.

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335 NE 1145a2.
336 Henry, Quodlibet, V.17, 198; Olivi, Quaestiones de Virtutibus, Q.6 For an overview of Olivi’s discussion, see Wood, Ockham on the Virtues, 51-53.
337 Ordinatio III.36.
338 De Connexione Virtutum, II.34–51.
339 For a detailed discussion of Ockham and Scotus, see Adams, “Scotus and Ockham on the Connection of the Virtues.”
340 We do not know with certainty whether Godfrey read Olivi’s De Virtutibus. We also have no precise date for when QO III was written, although it probably dates from five to ten years after De Virtutibus in the late 1280s (Lottin, Psychologie et morale, III, 504). I assume that Godfrey was familiar with Olivi, but it may also be the case that both he and Olivi drew upon discussions of prudence current at the University of Paris in the 1270s and 1280s.
341 Quaestiones de Virtutibus, 6.275: “Prima sumitur ab Aristoteles, supponente quod ad omnes virtutes morales dirigat sola una virtus seu solus unus habitus prudentiae, sine quo morales
However, he does not accept that the dependence between prudence and the character virtues establishes any form of connection of the character virtues, instead arguing that there are many different types of prudence in the same way as there are many different character virtues. That is to say that there is one prudence proper to justice, another prudence proper to moderation, another proper to generosity, and so forth. Olivi’s argument turns upon the notion is that there is no reason to accept that prudence is different from the sciences—prudence has no more substantial unity than geometry, for example. Just as we can know some given conclusion within geometry without knowing them all, we can possess some given element of prudence without possessing them all. A science such as geometry is clearly unified in the sense that we can correctly think of it as one science—we need not assume that the various parts of geometry are wholly unrelated merely because we can possess parts of it without possessing all of it. But as we have seen in chapter III, this involves the singularity requirement, not the indivisibility requirement.

While the Dependence Argument requires the substantial unity of prudence, the Many Kinds of Prudence Challenge entails that it is possible to possess prudence in respect to a given character virtue without possessing the types of prudence required for the others. Olivi thus objects that Aristotle has not provided us with an argument for why there is anything more than dependence between a given character virtue and a particular element or type of prudence.

V.3.1. Godfrey’s Own Formulation

The objection to the unity of prudence as reconstructed in Godfrey’s Utrum prudentia sit una virtus, which focuses on the relationship between prudence and the character virtues, close approximates Olivi’s original formulation. Godfrey states, for example, that

It is argued that prudence is not one in respect to species because prudence is concerned with the human good, but the human good is not one in respect to species. This is evident since the human good concerning a moderate act is not...
the same as the human good concerning a brave act, and similarly in other cases. Ergo, etc. ([QO III.ob13 (PB.14 121)].)

The problem for Godfrey is that what he considers to be a plausible way in which to distinguish between the various character virtues also gives us reason to think that there are many kinds of prudence. Godfrey here follows Aquinas’ analysis that there are many ways in which a person can be good, such as by being generous, courageous, just, and so forth, which is to say that different character virtues incline human beings to different types of good actions. But if prudence is concerned with human good, and if human good is not unified, but rather a plurality, then why are there not correspondingly different types of prudence? Stated otherwise, why can we not use the same principle to distinguish between different types of prudence that we used to distinguish between the various character virtues?

I maintain that Godfrey regards the problem of the unity of prudence more seriously than Aquinas. We have seen that Aquinas addresses problems concerning whether the character virtues are as unrelated as the various arts or sciences. In contrast, Godfrey appears to be concerned that an account of what makes the various character virtues distinct from each other provides a reason to also regard prudence as divisible. Godfrey clearly does not want to abandon the approach he has taken concerning the relations between human goodness, a unified prudence, and the character virtues. Godfrey instead defends a unified conception of prudence because he accepts the idea of a

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344 Arguitur quod prudentia non sit una secundum speciem: quia prudentia est de bono humano; sed bonum humanum non est unum secundum speciem; quod patet. Quia aliud est bonum humanum secundum actus temperantiae et aliud secundum actus fortitudinis, et sic de aliis; ergo etc.

345 I examined this type of account in Chapter I.

346 ST I.II.65.1.

347 This difference might be related to that Godfrey has a different account from Aquinas of how dispositions as accidents of the human soul function (see [QO XVIII, particularly 155–215]). He also develops this account in discussions of charity in Quodl. II.10 (PB.2 139-48) and Quodl. IX.11(PB.4 247-250). Also important for Godfrey’s discussion of accidental forms is his discussion of the Eucharist in Quodl. XI.3 (PB.5 12-22). For a comprehensive analysis of Godfrey’s position, see Stephen D. Dumont’s excellent and detailed study (“Succession Theory of Forms”). Dumont argues that Godfrey’s contemporaries were correct in maintaining that Godfrey held what could be regarded as a succession theory of forms, whereby any change in respect to a form leads to a new distinct form inhering in the subject. A change in form (substantial or accidental) is thus a matter of one form succeeding another, an example being that if someone becomes wiser or more courageous, they acquire a new accidental form. However, there is a dispute among scholars concerning whether Godfrey in fact adheres to such a succession theory, with Wippel arguing, for example, that there is no convincing evidence for ascribing such a view to Godfrey (“Godfrey of Fontaines on Intension and Remission of Accidental Forms”). Although I find Dumont’s arguments convincing, nothing concerning the purpose of our discussion hinges on whether Godfrey held such a theory. What is central to the present discussion is that he rejects Aquinas’ analysis of accidental change, of which dispositions comprise a particular case – he is explicit on this point. Wippel and Dumont thus disagree in respect to Godfrey’s final position, not the view he critiques.
unified activity in respect to the character virtues that can only be explained by the indivisibility of prudence.

V.3.2. How Could one Respond to the Challenge?

My position is that the Many Kinds of Prudence Challenge is a serious problem for anyone who believes that prudence can play a central role in accounting for Strong Global Connection insofar as the Many Kinds Prudence Challenge assumes very little about the nature of prudence. It instead shifts the burden of proof to defenders of the Dependence Argument. Why is prudence any different from the variety of sciences or skills? If the other intellectual virtues can be acquired in a partial manner, why is prudence different in this respect? This forces the defender of the Dependence Argument to provide an explanation for why prudence is not partially but substantially unified, that is, an account which explains why is it impossible to know what is just without also knowing what is moderate.

One might argue that it is impossible for an agent to learn how to reason well in respect to a particular character virtue in complete isolation from the others,\(^\text{348}\) which is to say a proper account of how prudence is learned would reveal that prudence cannot be acquired merely in respect to individual character virtues. However, this approach appears to establish no more than if one has acquired an ability to reason well regarding a given character virtue, then one should also have at least some ability to reason well regarding the others. I thus maintain that such an approach can never demonstrate anything more than prudence has a partial unity. But if prudence is only partially unified, then the Dependence Argument proves Weak Global Connection instead of Strong Global Connection.

Gary Watson has proposed a more promising tactic – instead of focusing on how prudence is acquired, we should rather investigate how a proper account of moral understanding requires that prudence be substantially unified.\(^\text{349}\) This argument would not turn upon how people acquire and maintain prudence in respect to specific character virtues, but would instead address how an understanding of what is required by a given character virtue also involves an understanding of what is required by all of them. Although Watson does not accept that a plausible account of moral understanding entails this requirement, my view is that there is good textual support for maintaining that Godfrey does.

\(^{348}\) For an argument concerning the unity of prudence that focuses on how prudence is acquired, see Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 84–98.

V.4. A Unified Conception of Prudence

Godfrey’s approach centers on identifying a unified object for prudence, and his aim is to resolve this issue without denying the plurality of the character virtues. He observes in this regard that prudence may be concerned with the human good under both its proper aspect (ratio propria) that is specific for each given virtue, and its common aspect (ratio communi) that is relevant to all the character virtues. Moreover, Godfrey regards the latter as ensuring that prudence has a single object and is a unified virtue without denying the plurality of the character virtues insofar as the distinction between the proper and common aspects of the good entails that prudence is concerned not only with the separate human goods associated with particular character virtues, but also with the human good in its common aspect (ratio). Godfrey writes that

For although there is a great diversity in human actions in respect to which a human being is called good or bad, and in respect to the thing and to species and to how they are considered in themselves, because of which they also constitute diverse dispositions insofar as they are by themselves objects under the aspect of their various principles, which is obvious because the human being is inclined towards them by a number of dispositions of character, each one can be grasped by reason as different in accordance with the various aspects proper to each (QO III.3 (PB.14 130)).

Godfrey thus recognizes the great diversity in human activities, whereby humans can be good in many ways and individual virtues incline humans to different types of virtuous actions. For example, when prudence considers individual character virtues under their proper aspect, it takes into consideration what is proper for each virtue, such as how courage and moderation incline the virtuous person to action under two different proper aspects of the good. But while we use particular prudence to make judgments about what is entailed by a particular virtue, prudence can also bring all virtues together under what Godfrey terms their common principle, that is, the “human good is to be done in some way” (QO III.3 (PB.14 130)). This has significant implications. Godfrey states, for example, that

Through this [common] aspect whereby prudence has to consider the human good according to chastity, prudence also has to consider the human good according to generosity, because to be a human good is something that pertains

\[350\] QO III.3 (PB.14 130).
\[351\] Licet enim agibilius humanis secundum quae dicitur homo bonus vel malus sit plurima diversitas secundum rem et secundum speciem et ut secundum se considerantur, propter quod etiam diversos habitus bene constituant, in quantum sub illis rationibus suis propriis sunt per se obiecta, sicut patet quod per plures habitus Morales inclinatur homo in illa, in quantum tamen unumquodque a ratione quod diversa secundum proprias rationes.
\[352\] …bonum hominis secundum quod huiusmodi est agendum.
to none of them in itself and primarily, but rather to any of them equally. Therefore, such an equality belongs to the consideration of prudence (\textit{QO} III.3, \textit{(PB}.14 130)).\textsuperscript{353}

That is to say that universal prudence pertains to a certain equality in respect to the common aspect of the good because no particular good of any of the character virtues is the human good in itself or primarily – moderation, for example, is no more a virtue than courage. It is thereby an element of prudence to take into consideration a certain equality among the character virtues. Furthermore, when prudence takes into consideration the common aspect of the good, different particular goods are taken into consideration analogically (\textit{analogantur}) in relation to each other.\textsuperscript{354} Godfrey consequently remarks that “A unity of the object is required for a unity of disposition, not according to a univocal unity of genus and species, but through the aspect of analogy” (\textit{QO} III.3 \textit{(PB}.14 129)).\textsuperscript{355} It is this point that comprises the basis for Godfrey’s answer to the challenge that prudence lacks substantial unity insofar as it provides a unified object for prudence.

Godfrey argues that taking the various character virtues analogically in respect to the common aspect of the good – one thing (unified prudence) taking two or more distinct things (character virtues) into consideration – comprises the unified object of prudence. That is to say that there must be something more than a particular prudence for each of the character virtues, which ensures that prudence is not ultimately divisible because there is an activity of prudence that requires the unity of prudence. Godfrey does not accept that prudence has a unified object in the sense that the character virtues are elements of a common genus, but instead identifies such an object in respect to the activity of prudence. He thus regards himself as having provided an answer to his own formulation of the \textit{many kinds of prudence} challenge. However, it is far from straightforward what this solution entails. What is the analogical whole within this context, and to what type of equality is Godfrey referring? It is clear that universal prudence operates on a different level than particular prudence, but the question is how we should understand this level. Irwin observes that Godfrey makes explicit certain assumptions made by Aquinas, proposing that Godfrey’s notion of universal prudence constitutes what he terms \textit{macro-prudence}.\textsuperscript{356} If this were the case, universal

\textsuperscript{353} Unde sub ea ratione qua prudentia habet considerare de bono hominis secundum castitatem, habet etiam considerare de bono eius secundum liberalitatem, quia hoc quod est esse bonum hominis per se et primo nulli istorum convenit, sed cuilibet quasi aequaliter; et ideo quodlibet aequo ad considerationem prudentiae pertinet.

\textsuperscript{354} \textit{QO} III.3 \textit{(PB}.14 130).

\textsuperscript{355} \ldots tamen est unus habitus secundum essentiam et speciem; ad unitatem enim habitus requiritur unitas objecti, non secundum unitatem univocationis generis vel speciei, sed analogiae ratione.

\textsuperscript{356} Irwin follows Lottin in assuming that there is a certain consensus about how the distinction between universal and particular prudence is used during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth
prudence would then be concerned with the final end of human happiness, while particular prudence would address the good concerning each virtue in particular situations. However, on my relational reading universal prudence is manifestly not concerned with happiness as a final end, but rather seeks to determine the correct relations between the various virtuous inclinations, which is to say that we need universal prudence in order to identify the correct circumstances for particular virtuous actions.

I will now proceed to develop what I refer to as the relational reading of Godfrey’s argument. The clearest support for such a reading is provided by Godfrey’s novel discussion of the similarities between prudence and medicine.

V.4.1 Medicine and Prudence

In his discussion of the unity of prudence, Godfrey follows the ancient metaphor between prudence and medicine to detail his view, presenting prudence as the medicine of the human soul. That is to say that while medicine concerns the good of the body, which is health, prudence concerns the good of the soul, which is virtue. In addition, a medical doctor is concerned not only with the health of the various parts of the body, such as the hands, heart, lungs, and so forth, but also with the health of the body as a whole. Godfrey argues in this vein that “it is not sufficient that one consider the condition of one part, but must rather consider that of any part whatsoever and the relation of one part to the other” (QO V.264–265), which is to say that the character virtues of the soul are distinct from each other just as the various parts of the body are. But while particular prudence is concerned with the various distinct character virtues, a prudent person must also consider a given virtuous inclination in relation to the others just as a medical doctor needs to consider the body as a whole when making a judgment about which treatment to provide to the patient.

This metaphor turns upon how being a doctor involves careful judgment about maintaining the health of the human body, for it involves seeing how a
particular part of the body is related to all the others. Comparing prudence with medicine is thus intended to express that a prudent person must make careful judgments about the different virtues in relation to each other, and it provides a model for what to look for when taking into consideration the relations between the distinct character virtues and the activity of prudence.

Godfrey thus argues that although the various character virtues are distinct from each other, prudence needs to consider the virtues in relation to each other just as a doctor needs to consider the separate parts of the body in relation to each other. In the same way that physical health or the proper functioning of a given part of the body is dependent upon the relation between that part and the whole, that which accords with a given character virtue is dependent upon its relations with the other character virtues within a whole. The health-virtue metaphor thus helps us see why prudence needs to have substantial unity – one cannot possess only one element of prudence because the scope of prudence involves understanding how the character virtues are related to each other. One can possess particular prudence in respect to a given character virtue only if one possesses prudence as a whole, that is, prudence in respect to all the character virtues. Just as it is an aspect of a doctor’s ability to take into consideration the relations between the different parts of the body, a prudent person is capable of judging correctly how different character virtues are related to each other.

How should we then understand the nature of the distinct level upon which universal prudence operates? As noted above, I do not accept that we should regard universal prudence as concerned with happiness as the final human end, primarily because I do not accept that Godfrey regards universal prudence as concerned with what is good generally and particular prudence as concerned with what is good in particular situations. I propose that there is another way of thinking about the difference between universal and particular prudence, namely, it involves the distinction between what is good in a restricted and an unrestricted manner. In this sense, one is faced with two questions in any particular situation – what we have reason to do in the particular circumstances, and what we have reason to do, all things considered. Although a particular consideration may provide us with a reason to perform a specific action in a given situation, taking into consideration all the relevant features of the same situation may provide us with a reason to perform some other action instead. I argue that the difference Godfrey seeks to establish between universal and particular prudence is in fact akin to this distinction. Particular prudence would thus be concerned with what is good in a restricted sense insofar as it is concerned with what is good in respect to a specific character virtue taken by itself in a given situation. In contrast, universal prudence would involve the ability to take into consideration all of our virtuous inclinations in respect to a specific situation and judge which virtue takes precedence.
We will now apply Godfrey’s framework understood in this manner to an example in which more than one virtue is relevant in a particular situation.

V.4.2. Moral Conflict

How should we apply Godfrey’s approach to Jean-Paul Sartre’s classic example of moral conflict? Sartre describes a young student who is faced with two conflicting alternatives – either he joins the Resistance in order to fight the Nazi occupation, or he stays at home to care for his ailing mother. To make this example relevant to our discussion, let us assume that the student, whom we will call Pierre, has two alternatives that correspond to two virtuous inclinations. To join the Resistance would be good in accordance with the virtue of courage, while staying home would be good in accordance with the virtue of caring for the sick. Let us further suppose that Pierre is a prudent person who finally chooses to stay at home with his mother.

We should first note that Pierre’s choice to stay home need not be due to any lack of courage insofar as it is the consideration of caring for his mother that motivates him to do so. He recognizes the good of fighting for his country, but because he is prudent, he can see that caring for his mother takes precedence in the given situation. This does not mean that caring for his ailing mother would always – or even in most cases – take precedence over concerns of courage.

How should we apply the terminology of the proper and common aspects of the good in this example? I argue that it is within the scope of prudence to make judgments after taking all things into consideration, which is to say that viewing the character virtues in respect to the common aspect of the good involves judging what one has the greatest reason to do at a given moment, all thing considered. The ability to correctly see which virtuous inclinations take precedence in a particular situation is what distinguishes universal prudence from particular prudence. If Pierre takes into consideration his role as a citizen and not his obligations as a son, prudence tells him to join the Resistance. Although this would be good taken in a partial manner, or as the human good proper to courage, we assume in the present case that it would

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361 I do not use Sartre’s example to show that there are key similarities between Godfrey and Sartre. I instead take it as a well-known example of moral conflict that can be used to cast light on conflict between character virtues. For a detailed account of medieval discussions of moral conflict in general, see Dougherty, *Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought*.

362 I am interested at this point in resolvable, not unresolvable, moral conflicts, or what may be termed moral dilemmas. I follow Hursthouse categorization (*On Virtue Ethics*, 43–62), which is also used by Dougherty (*Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought*).

363 In Sartre’s original version of this example one can choose either action.

364 Chang, “All Things Considered”; Ross, *The Right and the Good*, 19–30. I am here interested in different reasons within the moral domain. All things considered, reasons are sometimes used to refer to reason across all domains of reason. For example, a person may have a reason to follow a certain rule of chess, but all things considered reason to follow a moral principle.
not good in an unrestricted manner. We may expand our example to include Pierre’s brother Julien in order to clarify the sense in which joining the Resistance is an act of bravery in a restricted sense. Insofar as Pierre is better suited to taking care of their mother than his brother Julien, Julien not only has a particular reason to join the Resistance, but also a reason to do so after all things are taken into consideration.

It would thus be truly good for Julien to join the Resistance, but not so for Pierre. It is clear that both brothers in fact have a reason to join the Resistance. But because Pierre is a prudent person, he sees that he both has a particular reason to join the Resistance – doing so would be courageous considered by itself – as well as a reason to care for his ailing mother, and that the latter is what he has the greatest reason to do, all things considered.

V.4.3. Holism concerning virtue and analogical reasoning

In light of the reading I have proposed, prudence judging between two (or more) moral inclinations in respect to the common aspect of the good consists of an act of comparison through which the correct place for a given inclination is found among other inclinations towards various virtuous actions. This would comprise the type of equality that Godfrey argues lies within the scope of prudence in regard to making judgments, and it explains Godfrey’s use of analogy within this context. Making a prudential judgment in accordance with the common aspect of the good does not involve bringing the various virtues together under a single universal aspect, but rather constitutes discovering what the human good is by comparing the separate virtues and understanding how they are related. Universal prudence involves an act of comparison, not subsuming the character virtues under a more general concept, such as happiness. A prudent person must be able to determine upon which virtuous inclination there is the greatest reason to act in a specific situation. This requires a firm grasp of what the various character virtues entail, an understanding of the particular situation, and the ability to take the relations between the virtues into consideration and compare them. We should not assume that anything more is needed given that Godfrey does not refer to the use of a single conception of human happiness in his discussions.

The relational reading provides an explanation for why one would need all the character virtues to be prudent insofar as it is not possible to locate the correct place for a given virtuous inclination if one does not possess all the different character virtues. A person who is inclined only towards some virtuous actions, but not others, will over-emphasize the concerns associated with one or more given virtue at the expense of other virtues. A person who

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365 This account is not compatible with a perceptional account of prudence, in which a prudent agent simply sees what he ought to do in any given situation (McDowell, “Virtue and Reason”). As we will see in Chapter VII, Godfrey explicitly rejects such an understanding of prudence.
does not possess all the character virtues will incapable of comparing all the relevant moral features of a particular situation in the right manner. For instance, if Pierre was only sensitive to the concerns of courage, he would not see that care takes precedence in the situation in question. The fact that Pierre is also brave is what makes him entirely justified in caring for his mother. If he would have been a coward and unwilling to defend his country, he would be unable of making the reliable judgment that in the given situation he should indeed choose to take care of his mother. In other words, Pierre needs to grasp not only that his ailing mother is in need of care, but also the correct weight of that consideration within the present circumstances.

One is fully justified in acting upon any given virtuous inclination only if he can make the correct judgment that this inclination takes precedence in the specific situation. A person cannot act on any virtuous inclination in a fully justified way if the relation between specific virtues is not taken into consideration. In other words, a fully prudent person must grasp not only the proper good of each virtue, but also how the virtues are suitable arranged in respect to each other in order to know what the correct instantiation of any character virtue is. In this respect, what makes Pierre fully justified in choosing to care for his mother is the fact that he also grasps how that act is related to the act of joining the Resistance.

We should note that Godfrey does not accept that we are motivated to act by the common aspect of the good as such,366 but rather by some proper aspect, and it is prudence that finds the correct place for our particular virtuous inclinations in respect to the common aspect of the good. Godfrey does not break with the basic model that prudential reasoning begins with specific inclinations towards particular ends, but he does maintain that acting properly upon such inclinations requires that one grasp which inclinations take precedence in the given situation.

Godfrey thereby endorses a form of holism concerning what is required in respect to the character virtues in particular situations, such as how what is courageous depends not only upon courage, but also upon the relations that courage has with the other virtuous inclinations in a specific instance. An element of what constitutes a specific virtue – acting in accordance with that virtue in a concrete situation – is that it be suitably arranged in relation to the other character virtues. If the latter is not the case, it is not a virtuous inclination, such as when it would not have been truly courageous for Pierre to join the Resistance. It is the fact that a virtuous act has a place within the whole that renders it a true human good and a virtuous action.

It is on the third level of virtue discussed above that we possess good inclinations that are formed by prudence in such a way that we act only as we should and in the right circumstances. That is to say that an inclination to act is not a virtuous inclination if it is not suitably arranged in relation to other

366 QO III.3 (PB.14 131).
inclinations – all of the character virtues matter whenever we would act upon any of our good inclinations. We can formulate such virtue holism as follows:

An inclination towards certain acts is a virtuous inclination only if it fits within a suitably arranged whole that includes other virtuous inclinations as well.

A specific character virtue can ultimately exist only within a web consisting of the other character virtues – a given inclination towards certain acts is truly virtuous only when it accords with the other virtuous inclinations that are relevant at the moment. From this perspective, any particular character virtue essentially depends upon prudence as a whole, which is not entirely divisible along the lines of the differing character virtues. Fully possessing moral understanding in a particular situation demands that one possesses prudence as a whole. However, the fact that what is truly courageous depends upon its place within a whole does not mean that we cannot distinguish the character virtues from each other. While courage, for example, has a specific definition since it has its own separate essence, it nevertheless relies upon the prudential ability to locate the correct circumstances for courageous action in order to be actualized in a particular situation.

One advantage of this approach is that it does not force Godfrey to deny that humans act from different virtuous inclinations. In addition, that fact that any given inclination is a virtuous inclination only if it is a suitably arranged in relation to our other virtuous inclinations is what makes it possible to account for how the character virtues are connected. Judging in accordance with particular prudence does not concern the relations between courage and the other virtues – it is an activity of universal prudence to grasp these relations and understand how they are suitable arranged. Returning to Sartre’s example, it is in accordance with the particular prudence of courage that one identifies a reason to join the Resistance, but doing so will not be a true act of courage if it does not stand in the correct relation to other virtuous deeds, which in this case includes caring for one’s ailing mother.

Should we accept the account of moral understanding that Godfrey proposes? One concern is that Godfrey’s medical metaphor does not provide a model for the holistic requirements of prudence in the sense that, for instance, one may question whether a medical doctor cannot judge appropriately about the health of a foot without having a grasp of the health of the body as a whole. We may nevertheless conclude that the conflict between Godfrey and Olivi concerning the connection of the virtues is a significant philosophical conflict concerning the holistic requirement to possess prudence in relation to the character virtues. But there is no simple answer in this regard, and Godfrey’s defense of Aristotle’s original argument
relied upon an interesting, albeit contentious idea of holism in respect to the character virtues.

We will now examine the major alternative to the relational reading of the good in respect to the character virtues, that is, the final end reading.

V.5. Prudence and Happiness

As Irwin presents his reading of Aquinas, he observes that Godfrey’s explicates the idea that prudence is unified because of the manner in which it involves deliberation concerning happiness as our final end.367 This position is worth considering in greater detail insofar as it raises a larger question concerning medieval Aristotelian accounts of virtuous deliberation, including the role that happiness plays in this regard. An important question, however, is whether Godfrey’s account of universal prudence may be understood in the way that Irwin proposes.

We have seen previously that it is through what Irwin terms macro-prudence that we deliberate and choose to act in accordance with particular character virtues as a means for attaining human happiness, such as choosing to cultivate bravery in particular circumstances. Macro-prudence stands in contrast to what Irwin calls micro-prudence, through which we grasp what a particular character virtue requires of us in particular situations. Irwin takes this to mean that a virtuous agent must be able on some level to grasp or articulate a single account of happiness as the ultimate end towards which all the various character virtues would be oriented, whereby prudence would be a unified virtue insofar as it involves choosing among the separate character virtues as means to the final end of happiness. Moreover, since a prudent person would then choose from among the character virtues on the basis of a single account of the ultimate end of happiness, it would supposedly not be possible to possess prudence concerning a particular character virtue without possessing it concerning all of them.368

Although this is an interesting idea in its own right, I do not accept that it is a defensible interpretation of Godfrey’s position. As we have discussed in previous chapters, the means-end relation is ill-suited for establishing connection between the character virtues insofar as different things can comprise means to one and the same end without being connected with each other in any necessary way, such as when one needs nails and wood to build a house, but can have the nails without having the wood. Stated otherwise, the mere fact that the separate character virtues comprise means to happiness does not establish Strong Global Connection. Olivi denied connection of the

367 Irwin, “Practical Reason Divided,” 199ff. Although Irwin is primarily concerned with Aquinas, he argues that Godfrey makes explicit certain of Aquinas’ implicit assumptions.
368 Ibid., 206ff.
character virtues through prudence and argued that character virtues have the same aim, which is to say that reference to the means-end relation provides no answer to the challenge he raised. But if each virtue can be directed towards the final end independently of the others, then prudence would be divisible and the Dependence Argument fails. Consequently, the final end reading cannot succeed by relying solely upon the means-end relation.

Perhaps a more promising way in which to understand the final end reading is not to focus on the mean-end relation itself, but rather on Irwin’s account of virtuous deliberation. Irwin maintains that one can understand how the character virtues are connected in a certain sense in respect to how the various virtues taken together promote true happiness, arguing that every virtuous decision is made in respect to a conception of happiness. That is to say that when a virtuous person seeks to grasp how the character virtues are related to each other, such as when endeavoring to decide which virtue takes precedence in a particular situation, they are in fact trying to understand which action will contribute the most to happiness. In the terms of this interpretation, Godfrey’s notion of the common aspect of the good would be happiness itself, whereby making a comparison between different virtues constitutes an effort to determine which action will make us happy in a given situation.

There are two problems, however, with such a reading of the common aspect of the good. The first is that it is not consistent with the specific terminology Godfrey uses to describe the common aspect of the good. For example, Godfrey insists that prudence brings all of the character virtues together in an analogical whole, not a univocal whole, while viewing them all as means to happiness clearly appears to constitute the latter. Godfrey thus appears to have something other than happiness in mind in this regard.

The second problem concerns the role that the final end reading assigns to happiness in deliberation, which does not accord with Godfrey’s general understanding of the relation between virtue and happiness. Thomas Osborne has convincingly argued that Godfrey seeks to provide an account of how virtuous people act for the sake of happiness without rendering virtuous action self-oriented in a way that undermines the possibility of true self-sacrifice. Briefly stated, Godfrey offers us a rather complex theory of how virtue makes us happy that turns upon the distinction between what he terms internal and external good. He argues that possessing virtue is the highest internal good, and that virtue makes us happy, but he does not regard virtuous actions as directly oriented towards the internal good. He instead maintains that they are

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369 Quaestiones de Virtutibus, Q.6. Wood brings this out nicely in her discussion of Olivi (Ockham on the Virtues, 52).
371 Quodl. X.6 (PB.4 318–325). Godfrey here discusses whether we can love God more than ourselves. This question becomes question relation loving what is good and wanting happiness. For discussion of Godfrey’s view of self-love and love of God see Osborne, Love of Self and Love of God, 136–49.
directed towards what he refers to as external good. For example, virtuous people are focused on such external goods such as common good of the community. A virtuous person does not focus on his own happiness when trying to decide what to do, but instead becomes happy by adopting the correct relation to what is externally good. On this view own happiness is not the direct object of virtuous deliberation since we will obtain what is good for us if we are directed towards what is externally good. There is no way for a conflict between what one should do in particular situation could be resolved with reference to happiness. That would be from Godfrey’s perfective to have the wrong kind of focus. It would be entail focus directly on internal good instead of the external good.

How we regard the role of happiness also matters for our general understanding of how virtue is addressed in medieval philosophy. For example, one problem with the final end reading is that it ascribes a large role in being virtuous to higher order reasoning, which risks overemphasizing the role of reflection about life as a whole for being a good person. Godfrey’s demands appear to be rather minimal insofar as he argues that possessing prudence and the character virtues enables us to obtain particular ends, and that when a virtuous person correctly acquires particular ends, he will also absolutely (absolute) attain the ultimate end of human happiness. Godfrey never states that a virtuous person has good inclinations because he has a correct conception of happiness.

Godfrey is of the view that the virtuous life entails a great deal of deliberation about what to do and when and how virtuous actions are to be performed, but he does not seem to require virtuous people to reflect upon the good life as a whole. In the chapter VII, we will discuss how Godfrey generally emphasizes that prudence is concerned with particular actions, and that prudential reasoning begins in particular situations when we are faced with a need to act.

How we understand the role of happiness in Godfrey’s ethics also influences how we view late thirteenth-century ethics more generally. Although Irwin follows Lottin in claiming that there is a uniform use of the notion of universal prudence during this period, I instead argue that a comparison of Godfrey’s position with that of Henry of Ghent indicates that although both seek to develop an account of universal prudence, they have rather different views of what that involves.

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372 Quodl. X.6 (PB.4 318–325).
373 QO IV.215–220.
V.5.1. Henry of Ghent and Universal Prudence

Irwin assumes that Godfrey and Henry of Ghent develop accounts of universal prudence along the same lines. But even though the idea of universal prudence plays a central role in Henry’s account of the connection of the character virtues, there are important differences between Godfrey’s and Henry’s positions in this respect.\(^\text{375}\) For example, Henry bases his discussion of the connection of the character virtues upon the notion of grades of virtue,\(^\text{376}\) which consist of inchoateness (*inchoatio*), progression (*profectus*), perfection (*perfectio*), and excession (*excessus*). From his perspective, the virtues are connected only on the fourth level, where universal prudence and particular prudence are integrated – Henry also uses the term experiential prudence.\(^\text{377}\) He claims that it is in fact impossible at this level to possess a given character virtue without possessing the others as well.

In addition to the fact that Godfrey does not invoke such grades of virtue in his account of the connection of the virtues, there are other important differences between him and Henry, one being that Henry argues that a person on the fourth level both sees what is conducive to some specific virtue, and understands that that virtue is good because it truly contributes to the final end.\(^\text{378}\) Such a person would then understand, for example, that defending the city is a courageous thing to do, and he would have a firm grasp of when and how to act in pursuing this end because he possesses particular prudence. However, he would also understand that defending the city and being courageous is part of a good and happy life because he possesses universal prudence, which is to say that universal prudence is the ability to see how the ends of the character virtues are starting points for moral reasoning.\(^\text{379}\)

\(^\text{375}\) For an overview of Henry’s moral philosophy, see Leone, *Filosofia e teologia della vita active: La sfera dell’agire pratico in Enrico di Gand*.


\(^\text{377}\) Henry also holds that if one seeks to obtain perfect virtue, he will ultimately need God’s grace and charity (*Quodlibet* V.17, vV). I understand this to mean that if one possesses a character virtue to the level of perfection possible without charity, then one possesses all of the character virtues to that same level. Henry would thereby hold a specific version of *Weak Global Connection*.

\(^\text{378}\) *Quodlibet* V.17, 189vA-B.

\(^\text{379}\) Hoffman argues that possessing universal prudence precedes possession of the character virtues and particular prudence both temporally and causally. See Hoffmann, “Walter Chatton on the Connection of the Virtues,” 60–62. Counet, in contrast, argues that universal prudence, character virtue, and particular prudence develop alongside each other (“Henri de Gand: La prudence dans ses rapports aux autres vertus morales,” 223). In this respect, understanding what is entailed by a given character virtue in a particular situation, on the one hand, and understanding the reason why character virtue contributes to the final end, on the other, gradually develop simultaneous until one reaches the highest level of virtue. The question depends on what Henry
thus regards universal prudence as determining in advance (*preastituere*) the ends of the character virtues,\(^{380}\) whereby it is a higher order form of moral reasoning that comes very close to what Irwin describes as *macro-prudence*.\(^{381}\)

We have seen that Godfrey instead regards universal prudence as taking into consideration the equality of varied and distinct inclinations and determining the proper time and place to act upon them, which is to say that when we already have various inclinations towards good ends, universal prudence takes them into consideration under the common aspect of the good. His position is not that universal prudence determines (*preastituere*) these ends in the first place. Henry regards universal prudence as a form of higher order reasoning that is a mark of a fully developed virtuous person, while Godfrey, in contrast, views universal prudence as a form of reasoning that concerns some particular situation in which one reasons about which inclination to ultimately follow. Even if both Godfrey and Henry should be regarded as significant figures in the thirteenth-century discussion that regards prudence as a unified whole with two distinct features, they present differing accounts concerning what these two features are.

V.6 Conclusion

I have presented Godfrey’s Aristotelian account of the connection of the virtues as well as his response to the challenge that there might be a particular type of prudence for each and every character virtue. Godfrey develops a detailed framework for understanding the connection of the character virtues that enables him to argue that they are connected because there is a mutual dependence between character virtue and prudence. He provides an essentialist account of this mutual dependence in which prudence is an element of what makes the character virtues what they are, and conversely.

Godfrey recognizes that the Aristotelian argument relies upon prudence being unified, and that if there are many types of prudence, then mutual dependence will not support *Strong Global Connection*. He argues that prudence is a unified virtue because it takes into consideration all virtuous inclinations under the common aspect of the good, whereby it falls within the scope of prudence to find the correct relations between different virtuous inclinations. That is to say that prudence entails the ability to make judgments about what should be done that takes all things into consideration, which is understood to indicate that prudence as a whole possesses a substantial unity. Godfrey thereby provides us with a rich and detailed account of how an

\(^{380}\) Irwin argues that Aquinas maintains that prudence establishes the ends of the character virtues (Irwin, “The Scope of Deliberation”).

\(^{381}\) *Quodlibet* V.17, 189vA-B.
Aristotelian can uphold the idea that the multitude of different character virtues are connected through a unified virtue of prudence. I have further argued that this type of relation reading is preferred over an account that focuses on happiness in explaining the unity of prudence as a whole.
Chapter VI: Gender, Roles, and the Character Virtues

Introduction

As we have seen Godfrey and Aquinas believe that there are many distinct character virtues, and that they are connected in such a way that one cannot possess any given character virtue without possessing the others as well. I now wish to turn to the question of how this analysis of character virtue relates to the ways in which Godfrey and Aquinas conceive of the differences between the sexes. Ancient and medieval thinkers believe that men and women are different, with men generally regarded as more rational, nobler, and less weak than women. They are also viewed as having distinct roles in society. Does this also mean that men and women have different character virtues, and that, in contemporary terminology, virtue is gendered?

Godfrey’s position is unusual within the medieval debate in that he explicitly denies the possibility of gendered character virtues. He clearly states that men and women must have the same types of character virtues, arguing, for example, that just as there are no female and male ways in which to understand geometry, there are no male and female types of courage. Godfrey here breaks with Aristotle’s presentation in Politics I.13 of gendered character virtue and endorses a view similar to that of Plato, arguing that insofar as men and women have the same types of souls, the perfections (virtue) of their souls must also be of the same type. Furthermore, he denies that societal roles, such as being a husband or wife, can justifiably be elements of an analysis of character virtues since people in many different roles exercise the same types of virtues.

However, the fact that Godfrey regards character virtues as not associated with carrying out societal roles does not mean that he endorses any modern notion of equality between the sexes. He in fact argues that women can only possess a more limited degree (gradus) of the various character virtues than men. I argue in this chapter that Godfrey’s rejection of the possibility of

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382 For an overview of the discussion, see Bejczy, “Does Virtue Recognise Gender?” The only scholastic philosopher that appears to have endorsed a view similar to Godfrey’s is Bartholomew of Bruges (1286–1356) in his commentary on ps.-Aristotelian Economics Q.12. I am indebted to Pavel Blažek for providing me access to his forthcoming edition of this work.

distinct male and female character virtues is a direct consequence of a broader commitment within his theory of virtue such that the character virtues do not concern fulfilling societal roles.

This chapter consists of three main sections. I first briefly examine how one might relate the differences between men and women to the character virtues. I then discuss Aristotle’s views in the *Politics* concerning male and female virtue as well as Aquinas’s account of this issue, including how it is connected to his general account of role specific virtues. Finally, I look closely at Godfrey’s argument for why, in principle, there cannot male or female types of character virtues.

VI.1 Differences between men and women and the character virtues

Medieval thinkers following the classical tradition believe that men and women are very different, with men regarded as more rational and less influenced by their emotions. Women are described as more prone to weakness of will (*incontientia*) and as suited for domestic life, not the contemplation of higher truths. This supposed superiority of men over women holds true not only in matters of the household, but also in matters of religion, where women are viewed as unfit to hold offices within the church. Aquinas writes, for example, that “Women, according to the apostle, are in a state of subjugation and cannot have any spiritual jurisdiction” (*IV Sent.* 19.1.1.3.ad4), and that the “male sex is nobler than the female sex” (*ST* III.31.4.ad1).

My concern in this chapter is with the implications such differences have for a conception of the character virtues. Do men and women possess the same types of character virtue, or are there, for example, specific male and female forms of courage? The question I wish to explore further at this venture is the extent to which medieval philosophical thinkers maintain that a correct enumeration of the virtues necessarily includes a specification of female and male versions of the character virtues. Godfrey, for one, does not accept that any difference between men and women can ground different types of the character virtues, arguing that men and women possess the same virtues but

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384 For a broad overview of these views on woman in this tradition, see Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 1997; 2002.
385 *ST* II.II.156.ad1.
386 …mulier, secundum apostolum, est in statu subjectionis; et ideo ipsa non potest habere alium jurisdictionem spiritualem.
387 …sexus masculinus est nobilior quam femineus.
388 I will not focus here on whether there are general types of virtues that only woman can possess. Aquinas refers to St. Paul in *1 Cor.* 14:34–35 to support this view that silence is a virtue for women, but not for men (*InPo* I.10.8).
to differing degrees. Godfrey departs in this regard from both Aristotle and Aquinas in important ways, not least because he denies any conceptual connection between societal roles and virtue, particularly character virtue.

In the following section, I will briefly examine Aristotle’s discussion of specific male and female virtues as well as Aquinas’ relevant views in order to provide a background for Godfrey’s novel discussion.

VI.2 Male and female character virtue

VI.2.1 Aristotle’s analysis in the Politics

In Politics I.13 Aristotle presents what he views as a conundrum regarding the ethical status of women – he wishes to accommodate the subordinate position of women in relation to men, but must also take into consideration the fact that they are rational human beings. The problem that Aristotle must resolve is that if women have the same perfections and virtues as men, there is be no basis for why men should rule over them in the household. But he nevertheless accepts that men clearly have the right to rule over women, whereby there must be some difference between them in respect to virtue. Aristotle also believes, however, that the household would not function if women had no virtue, and that it would be inappropriate not to grant women some type of perfection and virtue insofar as they are rational beings.

Aristotle’s approach is to posit that female character virtue is of a different type than male character virtue, arguing that although female character virtues are true virtues, they nevertheless reflect the power relation between men and women. The moral difference between men and women is thus explained in relation to their different roles within society such that character virtue is perceived as relative to gender. More specifically, Aristotle describes female rational abilities as without authority (akuron) in order to accommodate his notion of their ethical status as rational human beings who are nevertheless subordinate to men. He concludes that while women are capable of rational deliberation, their power of deliberation is weaker than that of and therefore in need of male guidance.

There is a dispute among scholars concerning how Aristotle’s conception of the supposed lack of authority in female reason should be understood. Joseph Karbowski argues, for example, that it does not only concern a lack of what he calls intrapersonal authority, but also a lack of interpersonal authority. That is to say that not only do women have no control over their

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390 Politics I.13.

own souls and are easily influenced by their emotions to act against reason, but that they require male governance to exercise their reason as such. Stated otherwise, Karbowski argues that Aristotle believes that women’s ends in life are not assigned by women themselves, but rather by men. As a result, their lack of authority is not simply a question of it being more difficult for them to exercise virtue because of their unruly emotions, but rather that women are completely unable to possess character virtue in the absence of male guidance, which is necessary for them to have the proper ends in life. Because female reason lacks authority in this sense, it cannot operate well independently of male guidance; moreover, women cannot possess virtue without male guidance, and their virtues are of a different type than those of men.

Women’s lack of interpersonal authority is also endorsed by Aquinas in his commentary on the Politics, where he closely follows Aristotle’s discussion of female virtue. The original political connotation of the Greek term for such absence of authority, akuron, is lost in its Latin translation as invalidus, which is perhaps best rendered in English simply as “weak.” But describing female reason as simply weak does not lend support to an intra- over an interpersonal reading of the text. However, Aquinas clearly agrees with the latter, maintaining that different accounts (ratio) can be provided for male and female virtue. For example, he describes women as possessing subservient (ministrativa) virtue, while men possess authoritative (principativa) virtue. He also points to Aristotle’s discussion in support of this view, remarking that male courage involves “not failing to execute what should be done out of fear,” while female courage comprises “not failing to do one’s duty out of fear” (InPo. I.10.10). Furthermore, duty within this context is determined by a man and women thus require male authority in order to exercise virtue, which is to say that women need men in order to be virtuous. As we will see even though Godfrey generally follows Aristotle, he rejects such ideas.

Aquinas’s commentary is a literal exposition of his interpretation of Aristotle’s position. He never provides an explicit account of male and female virtue in any other text, although he does discuss men and women and their

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392 See Fortenbaugh, “Aristotle on Women,” for an account that favors an intrapersonal reading.
394 For an overview of the commentary concerning the Politics in the later Middle Ages, see Flüeler, Rezeption Und Interpretation Der Aristotelischen Politica Im Späten Mittelalter.
396 Aquinas here follows his teacher Albert the Great, who states that female and male virtues have different being (ens) (Política, IX, G).
397 InPo 1.10.10.
398 …nullum timorem praetermittat ordinare quid faciendum sit.
399 …timorem non praetermittat facere proprium ministerium.
400 See also InEthic 7.4.9, where Aquinas argues that women may be referred to as continent or incontinent only in a qualified manner.
different societal roles in various places. In addition, not only does Aquinas never mention the notion of subservient female character virtue elsewhere, he even goes as far as stating that women can surpass men in virtue through the help of grace. However, I will not endeavor in this discussion to develop a comprehensive and coherent analysis of Aquinas’s view on male and female virtue, but rather focus on the connection that Aquinas maintains exists between virtue and societal roles in *Summa Theologiae*. This issue is the primary target of Godfrey’s criticism.

VI.2.2 Aquinas on virtue and societal roles

Aquinas affirms the existence of a particular relation between virtue and societal roles in his discussion of the types of prudence in *Summa Theologiae*, where he associates male and female virtue with role-specific virtues in general. He remarks that

As the Philosopher declares (*Politics* III.2), “it belongs to a good man to be able to rule well and to obey well,” wherefore the virtue of a good man includes also that of a good ruler. Yet the virtue of the ruler and of the subject differs specifically, as the virtue of a man and of a woman, as stated by the same authority (*Politics* III.2) (*ST* II.II.47.11.ad2).

Men and women thus possess different types of virtue in a manner analogous to the case of a ruler and a subject. A central point in this analysis is that Aquinas views marriage as a type of ruling, believing it to be an institution needed not only for humans to procreate, as with other animals, but also to provide women with male governance.

He claims that

For the female needs the male, not merely for the sake of generation, as in the case of other animals, but also for the sake of government since the male is both more perfect in reasoning and stronger in his powers (*SCG* III.123c).

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402 For a discussion of these passages, see Popik, *The Philosophy of Woman*, 27–35. See also Uffenheimer-Lippens, “On Thomas Aquinas’s Two Approaches to Female Rationality.”

403 Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut philosophus ibidem dicit, ad bonum virum pertinet posses bene principari et bene subjici. Et ideo in virtute boni viri inluditur etiam virtus principis. Sed virtus principis et subditi differt specie, sicut etiam virtus viri et mulieris, ut ibidem dicitur.

404 Aquinas believes that it was fitting for God to create Eve from Adam’s body because men are properly in charge of women. The fact that Adam was Eve’s superior indicates that marriage is not only associated with the need for procreation, but also expresses an aspect of human nature. Men’s supposedly superior intellect would make him naturally suited for this role (*ST* I.92.1–4).

405 Videtur etiam acquisiti repugnare si praedicta societas dissolvatur. Femina enim indiget mare non solum propter generationem, sicut in aliosis animalibus, sed etiam propter gubernationem: quia mas est et ratione perfectior, et virtute fortior.
Aquinas thereby regards marriage as a form of male rule over women within the household, from which it follows in accordance with his general principle that there is a difference between men and women at least in respect to prudence. Aquinas maintains that if we can identify a type of command, then we can also identify a kind of prudence, arguing that

It belongs to prudence to govern and command, so that wherever in human acts we find a specific kind of governance and command, there must be a specific kind of prudence (ST II.II.50.1c; see also III Sent 33.3.1.4c).

I believe it is safe to assume that if there is a difference in prudence between men and women because of male governance over women in the household, then there should also be a corresponding difference in character virtue, given the type of integration between prudence and the character virtues for which Aquinas argues. From this perspective, men and women possess distinct types of virtues insofar as they have distinct social roles – men possess types of virtues unavailable to women, and all are connected with governing in various ways.

It should be noted that this view possibly differs from that which Aquinas ascribes to Aristotle. Aquinas maintains that the prudence of rulers (kings, generals, husbands) comprises a type of prudence that can be contrasted with the prudence by which one rules oneself (aliquis regit seipsum iam). We then need to ask whether women possess a type of prudence by which they rule themselves, and Aquinas never explicitly denies that they do. The status of women may thus be viewed as analogous to that of the soldier in the sense that just as a soldier cannot possess the prudence of generals, women cannot possess the prudence of their husbands – but this does not exclude the possibility that women, like soldiers, possess the prudence needed to govern themselves. If this is correct, however, then Aquinas would not necessarily believe that women possess no virtue without male governance, but rather that women as wives possess different type of character virtues associated with fulfilling their particular societal role well, just as soldiers do.

This position is notably different from the position that Aquinas describes to Aristotle as defending insofar as women could then act virtuously without having duties ascribed to them by men. In this regard, Aquinas’s view concerning female and male virtue would be best understood as part of a general view in which virtue and societal roles are linked. This would mean that prudence and the character virtues exist on many different levels, and that

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406 For a general discussion of Aquinas’s account of marriage, see McCluskey, “An Unequal Relationship between Equals.”
407 This holds true at least for married men and women.
408 ...ad prudetiam pertinet regere et praecipere. Et ideo ubi invenitur specialis ratio regiminis et praeepti in humanis actibus, ibi etiam invenitur specialis ratio prudentiae.
409 ST II.II.50.in.
there are qualitative differences between the character virtues of different groups, whereby the prudence of a king, for example, would be the most perfect (*perfectissima*) type of prudence.\(^{410}\)

In general, any given human being can possess many variants of the same type of character virtue, which leads to a general proliferation of character virtues in respect to differing societal roles. For example, a male subject may possess both a particular set of character virtues as the subject of a ruler, and a different set as a husband. An analysis of courage must necessarily include an account of the different types of courage associated with different societal groups.\(^{411}\) Accounting for the structure of the virtues consequently entails an understanding of the virtues we need, including both the types of virtues, such as prudence, courage, or moderation, and their various subsets. The female types of character virtues are part of a larger system of such virtues. However, women can possess the prudence required to govern themselves, but cannot possess any other virtue related to ruling and governance. In this respect, accounting for distinctly male and female types of character virtue would be an element of understanding the structure of the virtues as it is understood in this dissertation.

We have seen how Aquinas ascribes to Aristotle the view that women possess what he terms subservient virtue. Aquinas develops a related view in *Summa Theologiae* such that at least one part of male and female virtue is directly linked with the roles they have, asserting that there is a particular relation between types of character virtue and female and male societal roles. It is this relation with which Godfrey takes issue.

I will now examine Godfrey’s explicit argument that there cannot be different types of character virtues for women and men.

**VI.3 Same souls, same virtues**

In *Utrum prudentia sit una virtus*, V, Godfrey addresses the question whether the differences between women and men indicate that they possess different

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\(^{410}\) *ST* II.II.50.1c.

\(^{411}\) Aquinas’s discussion of this point in *Summa Theologiae* creates a possible interpretive challenge regarding his view as a whole. It is often assumed that Aquinas believes that women and men possess different types of acquired character virtues, but that they possess the same infused character virtues by the power of grace (Popik, *The Philosophy of Woman*, 35; Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 2002; and Bejczy, “Does Virtue Recognise Gender?” However, Aquinas’s discussions of virtue in *Secunda Secundae* apply primarily to the infused virtues, although this is also where he presents his discussion of role-specific prudence. Furthermore, Aquinas believes that if women are granted grace, they are still not permitted to play any public role. He argues, for example, that Mary has grace “accordingly as it fits her condition” (*secundum diversitatem conditionis ipsorum*, *ST* III.27.5), which gives us at least some reason to think that Aquinas believes grace operates within societal roles. Fully addressing this matter requires an exploration of the relation between grace and social structure in Aquinas that is beyond the scope of the present discussion.
types of prudence and, consequently, different types of character virtues as well.\textsuperscript{412} He defends the position that men and women possess the same type of virtues, and that in principle there can be no such a thing as a specifically female or male character virtue – people differ in their degree of virtue, but not in the type of virtue they possess. All groups – children and adults, natural servants and freemen, men and women, ruler and ruled – in fact possess the same type of character virtues. The latter resemble our other mental abilities in the sense that just as there are no unique types of geometry for differing groups of people.

Godfrey presents a general argument in support of the notion that all human virtues – including the character virtues – are of the same type. His position resides upon the view that insofar as all humans have the same type of soul, and virtue is the perfection of the soul, then virtue must be the same for all human beings. He further maintains that practical wisdom is the medicine of the soul and is the same for everyone,\textsuperscript{413} and that there can be no special relations between societal roles and types of virtue. It is in fact impossible for there be specific types of virtues for specific groups insofar as societal roles do not constitute sufficient grounds for distinguishing between different types of character virtues – societal roles by themselves cannot ground any types of virtues. Because virtues are perfections of the soul, the only thing that could possibly ground different types of virtue for different groups would be that possessed different types of souls.

We will refer to this view as the \textit{Same Soul Argument}, which can be formulated as follows:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(P1)] The human good is the perfection of the human soul.
\item[(P2)] Men and women have the same type of soul.
\item[(P3)] The human good is the same for men and women.
\item[(P4)] The perfection of the human soul is virtue.
\item[(Con5)] Virtue is the same for men and women.
\end{enumerate}

P1 and P4 are central ideas in Aristotle’s account in \textit{NE} I, and in ancient philosophy in general. Aristotle argues that it is the rational soul that makes us different from other animals, and that human perfection is defined in relation to what is specific to humans. On this account, human goodness must be some rational activity of our soul.\textsuperscript{414}

We have seen that P2 is controversial within the context of Aristotelian ethics. For example, Nicholas Smith maintains that the main difference

\textsuperscript{412} \textit{OQ} 3.4 (\textit{PB}.14 132–38). For a discussion of Godfrey’s influence on the discussion concerning the possibility of political prudence, see Lambertini, “Political Prudence,” 336–44.
\textsuperscript{413} \textit{OQ} 3.4 (\textit{PB}.14 132–36).
\textsuperscript{414} \textit{NE} I.7.
between Aristotle and Plato regarding male and female virtue is that Aristotle believes that the soul is not sexless, whereby the souls of men and women do not function in the same way. From this perspective, the supposed difference in virtue between women and men would follow from the difference between male and female souls. Godfrey unfortunately provides no detailed arguments for why we should accept that all humans have the same type of soul, although he appears to assume that since the soul is the form of the body, all humans must have the same type of soul because we are all of the same species. We have noted that Aquinas maintains in *Summa Theologiae* that male and female virtues are linked directly with societal roles. This is the shortcoming of Aquinas’s discussion from Godfrey’s perspective insofar as there could be distinctly female and male types of virtue only if the souls of men and women were different.

Godfrey does not explicitly disagree with Aristotle, however. There is even a spurious reference in his text to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in support of the idea that male and female virtues are of the same type, although Aristotle says nothing along these lines. There are, however, certain similarities between Godfrey’s argument and Plato’s *Meno*. Plato writes:

> Is it possible to manage a city well, or a household, or anything else, while not managing it moderately and justly? – Certainly not.
> Then if they manage justly and moderately, they must do so with justice and moderation? – Necessarily.
> So both the man and the woman, if they are to be good, need the same things, justice and moderation. – So it seems.
> What about a child and an old man? Can they possibly be good if they are intemperate and unjust? – Certainly not.
> But if they are moderate and just? – Yes.
> So all human beings are good in the same way, for they become good by acquiring the same qualities. – It seems so (73c).

Although Godfrey could not have read the *Meno*, he shows a similar concern with the connection between virtue and human good. Like Plato, Godfrey does not view the human good as a manifold in the sense that the human good would be different for different groups of people. He indeed views it as implausible that societal roles can be part of the evaluation of the character of a person as a whole. Just as it is implausible for there to be a specific type of female understanding of geometry, it is implausible to believe there could be a specific type of female courage.

Godfrey does not allow for societal roles to have any function in his account of virtue in general. *Utrum prudentia sit una virtus*, IV raises the

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415 QO 3.4 (*PB*.14 133).
416 Translated by G.M.C Grube.
question whether prudence differs in relation to the different ends of the household and state, and he argues that both household and state concern the same human good. He states explicitly that Aquinas is mistaken in maintaining that household and state are proper grounds in any way for distinguishing types of character virtues, not least in that human beings are naturally social and political beings, and that both the state and the household contribute to a good and virtuous life. Godfrey argues that they have the same formal end for any given human being, namely, that of a virtuous and happy life, and that the distinction between them cannot serve as the basis for a division of virtue precisely for this reason. Godfrey maintains that one is a good father of the family (pater familias) and a good ruler through the same prudence, and he finds support for this position in a passage from NE VI.I where Aristotle states that “Prudence and politics are the same virtue, but they have different being” (NE VI.8, 1141b25). Godfrey claims that just as we do not need the authority to teach (auctoritas docendi) in order to have knowledge, we do not need political authority to have prudence, arguing that if prudence is the medicine of the soul, then we need no political authority for prudence to be able to treat our spiritual weaknesses.

While Aquinas believes that by becoming a ruler one will be able to acquire a more perfect form of prudence, Godfrey argues that gaining political power will not enable anyone to acquire any moral perfection beyond that which can be attained by being a subject. I take Godfrey to mean that although the character virtues may be expressed differently within different social groups, the latter will nevertheless exercise the same types of character virtue. Ruler and subject perform different actions, but this does not mean that their character virtues are of different kinds. What is required to act courageously, for example, might be different for a ruler and for a subject, but they both express the same type of courage— and the same holds true for men and women as well.

Godfrey also remarks that there are differences regarding, on the one hand, what one needs to know in order to be a good head of a family or leader of the state and, on the other, what is necessary to know concerning one’s own life. The point is that what one must know in order to administer the household or the state effectively does not provide the basis for evaluating a person’s moral status.

Godfrey is often thought of as one of the most Aristotelian thinkers of his time. How can he then break in this way with what Aristotle explicitly states? My position in this regard is that Godfrey is best understood as developing a line of thought from NE I and drawing what he believes are

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418 QO III.4 (PB.14 133).
419 QO III.4 (PB.14 136).
420 QO III.4 (PB.14 134).
correct conclusions concerning virtue as a perfection of the human soul. That is to say that although Godfrey accepts that Aristotle, generally speaking, is right, he does not necessarily believe that everything Aristotle says is of equal importance. There is thus the sense that Godfrey’s analysis is Aristotelian in character even if it is opposed to certain ideas that Aristotle explicitly presents in the Politics. He approaches Aristotle in the same way as many neo-Aristotelians in contemporary ethics, who draw extensively on the notion of virtue explored in the Nicomachean Ethics, but rely far less upon the roles of specific virtues that are discussed in the Politics. Godfrey thereby follows what he considers to be the general conclusions of the Nicomachean Ethics rather than adhering to any specific passage in the Politics.

István P. Bejczy claims that Godfrey expresses “pro-feminine” concerns, stating that Godfrey maintains that “the cardinal virtues exist in equal degree in men and women, as well as in masters and servants.” This reflects a misunderstanding of Godfrey’s overall argument, however, in that Godfrey does not claim that virtue exists to equal degrees in men and women. Although he questions the claim that men and women possess different types of character virtue, he does not argue that they possess these virtues to the same degree. He questions whether there are specifically male and female types of character virtue because he is concerned that any apparent difference in perfection between men and women could serve as the basis for there being different types of prudence for different human beings. But Godfrey never states that women can reach the same level of perfection as men, arguing instead that women are in a state similar to that of natural servants. The difference in perfection between men and women is what he refers to as a real difference and it cannot be changed. Godfrey contrasts the relationship between men and women (and servant and master) with the imperfection of boys in relation to men and with the subject in relation to the ruler. While the imperfections of boys are merely temporary in this sense that a boy can attain full virtue when he becomes an adult, such dispositions cannot change for women.

Godfrey recognizes that good men sometimes have to rule over less good men, which reflects the need to have good and competent rulers. This arrangement can change in to a different setting, where ruler and ruled are roles that do not imply differences in moral perfection – in this setting both can attain full virtue. But although boys and those ruled have imperfections that are changeable, women and natural servants supposedly possess unchangeable imperfections insofar as the latter are due to “unchangeable individual bodily tendencies” (QO 3.5. (PB.14 136)). From this viewpoint, however, women’s imperfections are explained in respect to the body alone,

424 ...dispositionem individui naturalem et invarabilem.
not the soul. That is to say that men and women have the same type of soul and the same forms of perfection of the soul, or virtue, but women supposedly cannot attain full virtue — at least not through their own efforts without the help of God — because of their bodily tendencies. In contrast to Aquinas, Godfrey does not accept that the character virtues that follow from charity are of a different type than acquired virtues insofar as they are the same virtues, although they have gained a new and higher purpose. Godfrey does not relate his discussion of female virtue to his account of infused moral virtues in any manner. I take it that Godfrey believes God-given grace can help women to acquire a higher level of moral perfection than is possible through their actions alone.

Godfrey thus ultimately ascribes the differences between men and women to the body, not to the soul, although he provides no direct explanation of how the body by itself can exert such a significant impact upon one’s ability to attain full virtue. Godfrey most likely follows the line of thinking that the body affects the emotions, and women can thereby not attain full virtue because of their alleged emotional unruliness. He would also agree that women are prone to weakness of will and lack what we have referred to as intrapersonal authority. But Godfrey does not accept that the female soul lacks interpersonal authority — women do not necessarily need men to be virtuous, even Godfrey most likely would think that it would be quite challenging for them to acquire virtue by themselves.

V1.4 Conclusion

The debate between Aquinas and Godfrey does not concern whether or not one is “pro-feminine,” but rather involves a disagreement about the moral status of bodily and social differences. Godfrey maintains that no social difference can ground different types of virtue, while Aquinas allows for this possibility. Godfrey instead believes that women and men possess the same types of virtue, although woman do so to a lesser degree because of their bodily dispositions. There is also a certain universalism in Godfrey’s account of virtue that possesses the potential for social critique, but he draws no conclusions in this regard. It is later feminist writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who take up this potential. Wollstonecraft states, for example, that

> men seem to be designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue... but I see not the shadow of a reason to conclude that their virtues should differ in respect to their nature (A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, III.28)

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425 QO XI.516–19; QO XIX.114–22.
The key difference in this respect is that Wollstonecraft aims to critique women’s roles in society, while Godfrey does not.
Chapter VII: Moral Reasoning – the Particular and the General

Introduction

In Chapter V, we explored Godfrey’s notion of virtuous deliberation and will now turn our attention to his account of prudence. Godfrey seeks to defend what he considers to be an Aristotelian notion of prudence, and he begins by associating prudence with a type of moral knowledge (notitia) that is acquired through the experiences of acting in particular situations. He develops this notion of prudence in contrast to what he regards as moral theory, that is, the science (scientia) of morality, suggesting that we should understand prudence as we do medicine or navigation. This chapter explores what is entailed by conceiving of prudence in this manner.

Godfrey’s account has three main features. First, he argues that prudence comprises an ability to think of the current situation in the light of previous experience. Second, he does not view prudence as the application of general principles that are provided by moral theory. Third, he maintains that no fixed rules can capture the complexity of any particular situation – identifying what is right in a given situation requires deliberative ability.

Godfrey’s discussion raises the question what is the nature and role – if any – of principles in an Aristotelian account of prudential judgment. There has been a growing interest in contemporary philosophy concerning the usefulness and place of general principles in morality that is marked by two main lines of debate, namely, generalism and particularism. Broadly defined, a generalist affirms the central importance of general principles within morality, while a particularist denies their importance. In addition, many scholars have regarded Aristotle, with his famous account of prudence in NE VI, as a forbearer of particularism, however others deny such

426 For an overview of this debate, see Hooker and Little, Moral Particularism, and Timmons, Moral Theory, chap. 11. For a detailed defense of particularism, see Dancy, Ethics without Principles. For a detailed defense of generalism, see McKeever and Ridge, Principled Ethics.
427 The debate has become increasingly multifaceted and complex, and there is little consensus on how these two positions should be understood in detail. For an overview of the discussion, see McKeever and Ridge, Principled Ethics, chap. 1.
associations. Much of the scholarly discussion of the role of moral principles and rules in ethics in the thirteenth century have focused on the reception and integration of Aristotle’s account of prudence. Certain authors have argued that the view of ethics as a moral science during the medieval period, in which the notion of natural law plays a prominent role, undermines the context-sensitive morality that Aristotle presents in his original model of the prudential agent. Others do not accept such conclusions and affirm that, at least for Aquinas, morality as a whole cannot be captured by any set of rules.

Terence Irwin notes that the contemporary and historical questions about the role of principles are intertwined, and that how we assess the possible role of principles in ethics depends on how we understand what principles are. While there is broad agreement that Aristotle considered morality to be both variable and context-sensitive, there nevertheless is considerable disagreement regarding whether a notion of principles could be compatible with such a view. Medieval versions of Aristotelian ethics are no exception in this regard.

As noted by Raphael Woolf we need to begin the discussion of these matters with some idea of contrasting views. I propose that, for the purposes of this historical investigation, we take generalism to be a view of morality in which general and exceptionless principles play a central and necessary role in ethics and understand particularism as comprising a skeptical position in this respect. We thus need to understand both how Godfrey regards prudence, and how his discussion is related to other common features of medieval ethics, in order to evaluate his view of moral principles. We will see that although his investigation of prudence is quite compatible with a

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430 Anthony J. Celano is the most prominent advocate of this perspective. See, for example, his “The End of Practical Wisdom: Ethics as Science in the Thirteenth Century,” “The Relation of Prudence and Synderesis to Happiness,” and Aristotel’s Ethics and Medieval Philosophy. One problem with Celano’s general argument is that reading Aristotle as skeptical towards moral science or theory has recently fallen out of favor, and I believe for good reason. For a good overview of this debate, see Henry and Nielsen, Bridging the Gap Between Aristotle’s Science and Ethics. This development renders the contrast with medieval philosophy less straightforward.
431 Daly ascribes a form of particularism to Aquinas when he observes that the prudent person is a person of complex moral reasoning, and that this type of reasoning cannot be communicated through norms. He adds that Aquinas does not attempt to formulate a comprehensive set of moral norms, and that there is in fact evidence that he does not believe that such a set of norms is possible in light of the importance of context and circumstances for right human action. See Daly, “The Relationship of Virtues and Norms in The Summa Theologiae,” see also Nelson, The Priority of Prudence.
432 "Ethics as an Inexact Science." 104.
433 “Particularism, Promises, and Persons in Cicero’s De Officis,” n. 8.
434 I here follow the broad categorization that Lance and Little present in “Particularism and Antitheory.”
particularist perspective on morality, other aspects of his thought do not appear to be so to the same degree. Godfrey not only endorses no version of an anti-theoretical position, he in fact views moral science as useful for anyone who aims to develop prudence and be a good person. Moreover, Godfrey follows Aquinas in maintaining that there is a natural law, and that we have the natural ability to know the first principles of the natural law through what they term *synderesis*. Godfrey also believes that there are a number of moral absolutes. In light of these issues, I will argue below that Godfrey remains best understood as endorsing a certain degree of skepticism concerning the need for general and exceptionless principles in morality.

This chapter consists of the following main sections. First, I explore Godfrey’s account of prudence. Second, I then discuss the idea that moral science is useful for developing prudence as well as his analysis of *synderesis*, conscience, and moral absolutes. Finally, I examine Godfrey’s account of moral reasoning in relation to certain recent accounts of the function of general moral principles.

VII.I. Godfrey’s project of distinguishing prudence

When attempting to relate historical positions to contemporary concerns, there is always the risk that we lose sight of what historical figures in fact argued for and therefore misrepresent their positions. In order to avoid this error, I will begin this discussion with an analysis of the problem that Godfrey seeks to resolve. His discussion of prudence is part of a broad medieval project that I explore in this dissertation, namely, how to enumerate the virtues correctly. Godfrey attempts to defend Aristotle’s analysis of prudence, particularly the unique status Aristotle ascribes to it among the intellectual virtues, and he develops a theory concerning the ability needed for correct moral reasoning given the diversity and variability of particular situations.

My discussion of Godfrey’s account of prudence and moral science is based on his QO II and III, in which he seeks to defend Aristotle’s account of intellectual virtue that is presented in *NE* VI. More specifically, Godfrey wishes to defend the view that we should distinguish the intellectual virtues as comprising wisdom (*sapientia*), science (*scientia*), understanding (*intellectus*), skill (*ars*), and prudence (*prudentia*).435 QO II raises a variety of problems (17 in total) in respect to this five-fold distinction, all of which concern whether it can be upheld. They are based on the point that what Aristotle himself says provides support for some other number.

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Certain of these problems are directly associated with our concern about the nature of moral knowledge. For example, Godfrey addresses the claim that prudence and skill cannot be intellectual virtues in the strict sense because they concern what is particular, not what is universal. He also examines the view that the knowledge about morality that Aristotle provides in *Nicomachean Ethics* comprises neither prudence, nor science. If this were the case, it could not be prudence because the latter cannot be forgotten, as Aristotle himself states, while what is discussed in *Nicomachean Ethics* appears to be something that can in fact be forgotten. Nor could it be science because practical knowledge as such is deliberative and not scientific, as Aristotle himself also states.

Godfrey seeks to develop a framework for understanding intellectual virtues in order to make sense of Aristotle’s quite brief discussion of such virtues in *NE VI*, and his primary question is whether Aristotle has suitably distinguished them. Godfrey argues that
to make this question clear, we should consider it with regards to difference and distinction of power and subject, matter and object, and also mode of thought (*QO* II (*PB*:14 97)).

He maintains that if we analyze Aristotle’s discussion in terms of these three issues, we can indeed account for the five-fold distinction that he presents. I will not explore at this venture how Godfrey accounts for the difference between wisdom, science, and understanding, but will instead focus on his account of the difference between moral science, which he believes Aristotle develops in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and prudence. Central to Godfrey’s account of prudence is that he believes it operates with the same mode of thought as skill, but nevertheless regards prudence as a distinct intellectual virtue. He thus seeks to explain both how prudence is an intellectual virtue, given the connection between prudence and particular action, and how it is distinct from moral science, which he claims Aristotle himself developed *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Godfrey argues that both prudence and moral science are perfections of the same power, that is, the human intellect, and that both concern human action, but that prudence is distinct from moral science by its end and by the mode of thought involved. He also draws a distinction between two uses of the notion of practical in order to explain his position, arguing that we may refer to something as practical knowledge either if it concerns human action, or if it itself is a part of action.\(^{437}\) That is to say that knowledge can be said to be “practical” either if it has action as its object, or is itself operative (*operativus*).

\(^{436}\) …ad evidentium quaesiti est considerandum circa differentiam et distinctionem potentiae et subiecti et materiae vel obiecti et etiam modi cognoscendi.

\(^{437}\) Aquinas presents a similar distinction in *ST* I.14.16.
In respect to the first use of “practical,” knowledge is practical if the object of that knowledge is action, whereby “practical” denotes what the knowledge in question is concerned with, not the role it has in actual action. Practical science would then be a science about matters of action. This use appears to correspond with how we use “practical” in contemporary contexts when we speak about “practical philosophy.” In contrast, “practical” in the second sense denotes the use of practical reason, which is the type of thought we are engaged in when trying to decide what we should do in a given situation. Such operative knowledge requires the use of our practical intellect and has action as its immediate end. Skill and prudence are thus not perfections of the ability of theoretical thought, but rather perfections of the practical intellect, which does not simply apply ordinary or theoretical reason to action, but is rather a specific mode of thought (modus cognosciendi).

The *Nicomachean Ethics* as a work of moral theory is practical in the sense that it concerns human action, but it utilizes a scientific mode of thought that aims at an abstract and general account of morality. In contrast, prudence is practical not only in the sense that it is concerns human action, but also because it is directly operative. – it is a perfection of the ability to identify the right thing to do in particular situations. We may then say that the direct aim of moral science is knowledge about human action, while the aim of prudence is actual action, whereby prudence is distinct from a scientific account of morality in that it involves a different kind of thought, even if both forms of knowledge concern human action – prudence and moral science comprise two different ways in which to think about the same object. Within this context, Godfrey refers to Simplicius’s introduction to his *Commentary on the Categories*, written, in the 6th century, in which he argues that the *Nicomachean Ethics* should not be considered to be a practical guide for good living, but rather a scientific treatment of ethical topics. Simplicius does not accept late classical ideas concerning ethics insofar as he observes that

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438 In the use of “modus cognosciendi” Godfrey is probably drawing on the analysis of grammar and human thought developed by a group often referred to as the Modistae. (including for example Boethius of Dacia, Martin of Dacia and Radulphus Brito). They focus on understanding language and thought through what they call the modes of signification (modi significandi), modes of understanding (modi intelligendi) and modes of being (modi essendi). For an overview of this movement, see Van Der Lecq, “Modistae”, Pinborg, “Speculative Grammar.”

439 In my judgment, Godfrey ascribes to what may be termed an intentional model of practical reasoning, which in the strict sense concerns not what one believes, but rather what one intends to do (Quodl. X.11 (PB.4 348-357)). In this regard, the practical and speculative intellects are distinguished by different ends, with truly practical thought involving what one should intend to do. For a discussion of Scotus’s argument against this conception of practical reasoning, see Hoffmann, “Duns Scotus’s Intellectualist Account of Practical Knowledge.”

440 *O II.2 (PB.14 126).*

441 Godfrey had access to Moerbecke’s new translation of Simplicius’s *Commentary on the Categories* (Chase, “The Medieval Posterity of Simplicius’s Commentary on the Categories: Thomas Aquinas and Al-Fārābī”). His usage of this text attests to the central importance of Simplicius in medieval accounts of virtue.
Aristotle utilizes divisions and demonstrations in *Nicomachean Ethics*, arguing that one needs to know demonstrations in order to be a moral philosopher. Godfrey clearly believes that the way in which Aristotle proceeds in the *Nicomachean Ethics* provides us with a sound reason to regard it as a scientific enterprise.\(^{442}\)

In *QO* III, which addresses various problems regarding the unity of prudence, Godfrey asks whether theoretical knowledge concerning morality and the prudence of wise people are in fact two separate forms of “prudence.”\(^{443}\) He evidently wishes to avoid an account of morality in which theory and the prudence of virtuous people are something wholly separate, which provides him with the motivation to develop an account of the differences between differing types of moral knowledge.

Central to Godfrey’s analysis of prudence as a distinct practical mode of thought is its dependence upon experience. Godfrey views prudence and skill as similar to each other, and distinct from the other intellectual virtues, in that they both rely upon experience, but they are also distinct from each other because they concern different things. Godfrey follows Aristotle and Aquinas in viewing prudence as concerned with human action and skill as concerned with production, the basic idea being that no one can acquire a skill without having experience of practicing that skill. It is impossible to become a carpenter simply by learning principles of carpentry insofar as one can learn carpentry only by practicing carpentry itself. Godfrey claims that prudence is similar to skill in the sense that it cannot be acquired without the relevant type of experience – neither prudence, nor skill can be taught. It is not the case that someone cannot acquire prudence with the help of others, but rather that no account of morality can teach one to discern what is right and wrong in particular situations. Godfrey clearly emphasizes in this regard the difference between abstract and experiential knowledge.\(^{444}\)

My position is that Godfrey is best understood as seeking to develop a theory of moral expertise, including the type of moral reasoning involved in reliably identifying what one should do. His discussion is thus shaped by a commitment to what may be termed the variable nature of ethics, whereby what is right/good varies significantly in different situations.

### VII.1.1 The variable nature of ethics

Godfrey argues that if we want to know what to do in a particular situation, we need to be able to make careful judgments because no fixed rules (*regulas*) or doctrines (*doctrina*) can capture the complexity of particular situations. A

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\(^{442}\) *QO* III.2 (*PB* 14.127).


\(^{444}\) Godfrey is not unique in his concern with experience insofar as there was sustained interest during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in experience as a type of thought. For an overview of this development, see King, “Two Conceptions of Experience.”
person who seeks to rely upon fixed ways of reasoning in particular cases not only will acquire no certain knowledge concerning what to do (certain cognitio), such inflexibility will indeed lead a person in many cases to commit the wrong action.\textsuperscript{445} Godfrey thus shares a concern with such particularists as Jonathon Dancy\textsuperscript{446} – a person cannot reliably come to know what one should do by directly following some set of fixed rules. Godfrey instead maintains that, in the practical sphere, “one finds as it were (quasi) an infinite diversity” (\textit{QO} II.4, 114).\textsuperscript{447}

The question we now face concerns the nature of this diversity and the implications it has for how we should view prudence and moral principles. Godfrey seeks to understand how one can reliably identify what they should do given the variable nature of ethics, and his discussion is intriguing in that he argues that the ability to do so implies a bottom-up model of prudence in which prudence depends upon relevant experience. One suggestion in this regard in the literature is that a prudent person possesses a fundamentally perceptual ability to see, so to speak, what they should do in the given circumstances. McDowell argues, for example, that Aristotle maintains that moral thinking does not concern how to use principles, but instead involves a trained ability to “see” what is right.\textsuperscript{448} Godfrey, however, rejects this notion.

VII.1.2 Prudence is not a perceptual ability

Godfrey devotes a great deal of attention in \textit{QO} II to explaining how prudence and skill are in fact intellectual virtues. He begins his discussion by addressing the objection that prudence cannot be an intellectual virtue because it concerns particulars.\textsuperscript{449} Should we then not regard it as a perfection of the sensitive power (\textit{potentia sensitiva})?

Godfrey responds to this problem by first elaborating a model in which prudence consists of two distinct parts, namely, not only universal thought, but also a sensitive ability to “see” which universal considerations pertain in a given situation that distinguishes prudence from an abstract knowledge of human actions.\textsuperscript{450} While we would thus be able to perceive, for example, that a certain action was courageous, Godfrey maintains that this model does not account for prudence as a strictly human ability, apparently because he wishes to emphasize that a prudent person is able to give reasons for their actions. A prudent person does not answer “It seemed good (or right or just) to me” when asked “Why did you do ϕ?” but would instead reply that “I did ϕ because of X.” Moral thought must therefore be different from perceptual states. While

\textsuperscript{445} \textit{QO} II.4, (\textit{PB}.14 113).
\textsuperscript{446} Dancy, \textit{Ethics without Principles}.
\textsuperscript{447} …quasi infinita diversitas inventur.
\textsuperscript{448} McDowell, “Deliberation and Moral Development in Aristotle’s Ethics,” 334.
\textsuperscript{449} \textit{QO} II. (\textit{PB}.14 95).
\textsuperscript{450} \textit{QO} II. (\textit{PB}.14 98–100).
one might be justified in believing that Socrates is white because he looks white, Godfrey believes that a prudent person will give reasons for their actions, and that such reasons will possess at least some level of generality.

From the perspective of the current discussion, the aspect of a perceptual model of moral judgment that Godfrey wishes to reject is that justification can be non-inferential insofar as he believes that justified human decisions have a syllogistic structure.\footnote{See McKeever and Ridge, \textit{Principled Ethics}, 76, for a discussion of non-inferential judgment.} Even if we take prudence to be a perceptual ability in only a metaphorical sense, Godfrey would regard it as unable to capture what prudence is.\footnote{McDowell focuses on the perceptual aspects of moral judgement (“Virtue and Reason”). See also Wiggins, “Deliberation and Practical Reason,” 45.} He would not maintain, for instance, that a carpenter’s ability to build houses can be understood as a perceptual ability – they do not simply “see” what they should do, but reason and deliberate concerning the various alternatives about how to construct some object. Godfrey instead maintains that prudence is a form of universal thought, and that moral decisions are conclusions of a practical syllogism. Godfrey wants to affirm status of prudence as intellectual virtue, as well as to account for the unique connection established between prudence and particular situations.

VII.1.3 Universal but not scientific thought

Godfrey denies that the prudent person relies upon a scientific mode of thought, arguing instead that

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no one would have prudence and consequently would not have character virtues unless he is knowledgeable and learned, but it suffices to have the universal knowledge that someone not ill-favored by birth can acquire with diligence or by living among other human beings (\textit{QO} II.4 (\textit{PB.} 14 115)).\footnote{…alioquin nullus haberet prudentiam et per consequens nec virtutes morales nisi sciens vel litteratus; sed sufficit notitia universalium quae unusquisque non male natus sua industria vel ex communi conversatione inter homines potest acquirere.}
\end{quote}

The grasp of morality that is specific to prudence is at least not directly dependent on theoretical considerations – prudence does not necessarily rely upon a person having scientific abilities. That is to say that it is at least possible to acquire prudence without being familiar with the sort of reasoning that Aristotle develops in \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}. Godfrey states that

\begin{quote}
Prudence in the proper sense includes thinking about actions according to some universal account or universally; however, this should not be called scientific knowledge (\textit{QO} II.4 (\textit{PB.} 14 113)).\footnote{… prudentia proprie dicta includit cognitionem operabilium secundum aliquas rationes universales sive in universali, non tamen propter hoc scientia debet dici …}
\end{quote}
Moral science as a mode of thought would thus be neither necessary, nor sufficient for effectively justifying practical judgments. This consideration leads Godfrey to maintain that prudence must involve a specific form of universal thought that he regards as distinct from theoretical or scientific knowledge of human actions. He instead wishes to focus on experience, maintaining that it is possible to acquire relevant experience without having any exposure to a theoretical account of morality.

Godfrey aims to uphold the view that moral decisions should be understood as entailing major and minor premises such that it is possible to describe a prudent person’s decision as the conclusion of a practical syllogism.\footnote{This does not necessarily entail that the prudent person explicitly considers every moral decision to be the conclusion of a practical syllogism. I see no reason for Godfrey to deny that a prudent person can at times act directly without much explicit thought.} The central point in his account is that both the major and minor premises are grasped by prudence; moreover, it is a matter of deliberation to determine upon which principles we should act in particular situations. Prudence would thus involve the ability not only to apply general principles that we know by some other means, but also to identify the principles that serve as the major premises of practical syllogisms. We have seen that Godfrey insists that prudence is an intellectual virtue in its own right, and that it involves universal knowledge as it is directed towards particular situations – he clearly states that prudence is “principally knowledge of particular matters, and it is a knowledge of universal matters only because of their application to the particular” (\textit{QO} II.4 (\textit{PB.} 14 114)). The prudent person grasps what Godfrey terms \textit{universalia ad particularia}, while science, in contrast, concerns \textit{universalia propter se}.\footnote{…unde generaliter verum est quod per nulla media quae possunt haberi per doctrinam vel disciplinam potest quis habere sufficientem notitiam de aliquo operabili cum occurrit in particulari agendum, sed per ea quae aliquis per experientiam et per considerationem eorum quae ipse expertus est potest accipere circa tale operabile aliquid quod erit minor propositio, et ex his debet ascendendo procedere ad acquisitionem maioris quae est pro principio.} What is the significance of this distinction?

In the effort to understand the role that principles play in moral thought, Godfrey maintains that it is important to note that prudence has a bottom-up structure, which is to say that prudential judgments begin with judgments about particular situations. Prudence indeed always begins with the grasp of a given situation, from which one ascends to a principle. Godfrey argues in this regard that

\begin{quote}

hence it is generally true that by no means that can be acquired through doctrine or teachings can anyone have sufficient knowledge about actions regarding particular situations, but one can grasp something about certain actions that will be a minor premise. From this he should, through ascending, proceed to accept a major premise that stands as a principle. This is done through experience and a consideration of what has been shown to be true (\textit{QO} II.4, 113).
\end{quote}
Godfrey maintains that prudential judgment must proceed in this manner because, given the variable nature of ethics, a prudent person must rely upon experience, not doctrine, in order to make a correct judgment about what to do. Moreover, insofar as he considers a prudential judgment to be a judgment made about a current situation in the light of previous experience, prudence comprises the ability to make qualified judgments through reflection upon a given situation in reference to the previous situations, both similar and different, that a person has experienced. This is what Godfrey ultimately believes prudence to be.

However, experience is not necessary simply because it helps one to become better at applying a set of principles through practice, for it is instead essential to the type of judgments involved in prudence. Godfrey states that an experienced person finds, as it were (quasi), a new principle that is acquired from consideration of the particular case on the basis of acquired experience (QO II.4 (PB.14 113)).

Such principles for action are revealed in particular situations when a person who is wise in respect to practice reflects on both the case at hand and their previous experience, whereby they reflect upon their previous judgments and experiences in order to find a suitable, and possibly new, principle for action. Godfrey thus believes that prudence is a mode of thought that consists of comparing a given situation to other situations of which one has experience so that such principles, capable of serving as major premises in practical syllogisms, will reveal themselves. That is to say that a prudent person is able to grasp whether or not a current situation is similar to or different from previously experienced situations in a way relevant for the judgment that must be made.

However, Godfrey does not accept that we can generalize from experience in respect to prudence in the way that is typical for natural science. He presents the example of rain, which is a variable phenomenon such that we can never know with certainty when it is going to rain. Godfrey does not claim that such variability excludes the possibility that there is a science about rain, and he indeed argues that we can form a scientific account of rain from our experiences of many instances of rain. He also maintains that we can grasp different instances of rain under a common notion. Godfrey argues, however, that this is impossible in respect to moral action in particular situations, and that there is a sense in which we have to return to our own experience and view a given situation in the light of that experience. Furthermore, this type of ability is not reliant upon scientific understanding, but rather upon what we acquire by living with other human beings.

458...aliquis est expertus quasi novum principium invenire quod quidem accipitur ex consideratione aliquorum particularium per experientiam acceptorum.
459 QO II.4 (PB.14 113).
It is noteworthy that a prudent person must be able to justify their actions to other human beings, which entails that they call attention to some salient feature of a situation. Godfrey takes this as indicating that prudence involves the ability to formulate principles upon the basis of a correct understanding of a particular situation, not merely an ability to apply principles correctly.

Godfrey’s account of prudence strongly emphasizes that prudence is concerned with particular situations, and that prudence is necessary for dealing with their variable and diverse natures. But there are also other aspects of Godfrey’s ethics that focus on more general features of morality, which we will now examine. My position is that the central importance of prudence is not undermined by his discussion of such issues, and that he provides a coherent ethical theory.

VII.2 General moral knowledge

VII.2.1 The usefulness of moral science

Godfrey’s conception of prudence and his commitment to the variable nature of ethics does not render him skeptical concerning moral science in general – he endorses no anti-theoretical stance. We have noted that Godfrey believes that prudence involves a grasp of what to do in particular situations, while moral science concerns what is good and right in the abstract for human beings in general. He also maintains that although moral science can be helpful for acquiring prudence, it is not necessary to know moral theory in order to possess prudence – moral science provides no certain knowledge about what one should do in particular situations.

Godfrey refers to Aristotle’s non-ethical works as he elaborates upon the nature of moral science, arguing, for example, that moral science and prudence stand in a relation of subordination and superiority to each other that is analogous to the relation between navigation to astronomy. Aristotle develops the idea of subordinate and superior forms of knowledge in the Posterior Analytics I.13 and Metaphysics I, in which he maintains that subordinate forms of knowledge are concerned with what is the case, while superior knowledge is concerned with why something is the case. In this respect, does not the practical syllogism justify why the virtuous person acted in the way they did?

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460 Godfrey’s proposed model shares certain similarities with David Wiggins’s reading of Aristotle, in which identifying the major premise involves spelling out “the general import of the concern which makes this feature the salient feature in the situation” (“Deliberation and Practical Reason,” 45).

461 QO II.1 (PB.14 103).

462 QO III.2 (PB.14 127).
For example, navigation is a skill and astronomy is a science. The navigator knows that when a certain star is in a certain position, one needs to navigate in a certain direction, but navigators do not need to account for why a certain position of the stars constitutes a reason for where to steer a ship. A good navigator can know how to steer a ship in relation to the stars without knowing the principles behind the movement of the stars that are studied in astronomy. But although astronomy provides an explanation for why a certain technique in navigation works, a knowledge of astronomy does not make a person a capable navigator. Not only is experience required to navigate well, navigation is not simply applied astronomy. When the relationship between prudence and moral science is described from this perspective, we may say, for example, that a courageous person knows that we should defend the city in a particular situation, that particular actions comprise the means for attaining this goal, and that a courageous person will perform courageous actions when they are in such a situation. In addition, a virtuous person formulates a principle for action in relation to the given situation upon the basis of their previous experience, and a practical syllogism is the formalization of a virtuous person’s moral decision.

If moral science were a superior form of knowledge, it would provide some explanation for why a given practical syllogism as a whole is valid. Godfrey states explicitly that moral science is not wholly unconnected (omnino disparati) with prudence, and that the two are united in the sense that they concern the same object and stand in a certain relation to each other. However, although a scientific understanding of morality is more perfect than prudence regarding thought (cognitio) about actions – moral science provides a deeper understanding of human actions and goodness – it is less perfect concerning actual operation. But Godfrey does not maintain that the need for moral science is solely theoretical insofar as he argues, following NE I.3, that a scientific understanding of morality is helpful for the development of virtue. That is to say that although one has no use for a theoretical knowledge of morality if they lack experience, a person who is decent and possesses a requisite amount of experience will profit from it. Furthermore, Godfrey believes that understanding morality from a theoretical perspective adds a certain firmness (firmus) and certainty to an ability to perform good actions that has been acquired through experience. One wishes that Godfrey had said more about how this process works, but his overall aim is clearly to establish a contrast between prudence and moral science, which provides us with a system for reflecting upon human goodness from an abstract and general point of view.

It is important to emphasize that Godfrey claims neither that we need scientific knowledge to know what we should do in particular situations, nor

463 *QO* II (*PB.14* 107).
464 *QO* III (*PB.14* 126).
that virtuous actions would not be fully justified if we did not possess a scientific grasp of morality. He instead argues that a scientific understanding of morality can guide one in their development of prudence and virtue. Godfrey provides no details concerning precisely how he believes that moral science is helpful, but he clearly does not suggest that it comprises a source of general principles for guiding action that can be applied in particular cases. My position is that Godfrey’s notion of the usefulness of moral theory does not undermine his view that there is a significant difference between moral theory and prudence. Going from a theoretical perspective to practical knowledge always requires a shift in how we think – prudence reflects upon the particular situation in the light of one’s previous experience, while moral science reflects upon actions in abstraction from particular situations.

VII.2.2 Conscience and Synderesis

We have observed throughout this dissertation that Godfrey goes to great lengths to defend what he takes to be an Aristotelian position in ethics. This does not mean that he never relies upon key concepts in the moral thought of his own time, such as conscience, synderesis (synderesis), and natural law (lex naturalis),\textsuperscript{465} which play central roles in Albert’s and Aquinas’s moral theories.\textsuperscript{466} Albert and Aquinas regard synderesis as the ability to grasp the first principles of practical reason,\textsuperscript{467} which are considered to be the self-evident universal principles of natural law, while they view conscience as the act of judging what follows from these principles in particular situations. Scholars have argued that their adoption of these notions strongly influenced how they read Aristotle and how they understood the character of practical reasoning and moral knowledge.\textsuperscript{468} While these concepts are wholly absent from Godfrey’s discussion in QO II and III, my impression is that this is due to his effort to defend Aristotle’s account of prudence. Godfrey does briefly discuss these notions in another work,\textsuperscript{469} and he follows Aquinas’s account closely in his description of the relationship between synderesis and conscience, whereby prudence concerns the application (applicatio) of the principles we know by synderesis.\textsuperscript{470} But he does not elaborate on his views concerning how conscience is related to prudence.\textsuperscript{471} The question is whether

\textsuperscript{465} It is very difficult to translate “synderesis” into English. While one possible choice is “intuition,” I have left it in the original since it is a quite technical term with a rather specific meaning.

\textsuperscript{466} For an overview of medieval discussions concerning conscience, see Potts, Conscience in Medieval Philosophy.

\textsuperscript{467} See Payer, “Prudence and the Principles of Natural Law,” 55–70, for an overview of Albert’s and Aquinas’s positions concerning the relationship between prudence and synderesis.

\textsuperscript{468} Celano, Aristotle’s Ethics and Medieval Philosophy; “The End of Practical Wisdom.”

\textsuperscript{469} Quodl. XII.2. (PB.5 83–92).

\textsuperscript{470} ST I.II.54.4c and ST II.II.47.6.

\textsuperscript{471} QDV 16–17.
Godfrey’s accounts of synderesis and the universal principles of natural law commit him to the idea that prudence applies general principles to particular situations. Stated otherwise, should we regard Godfrey as inconsistent in his use of moral principles?

Godfrey states that we need to view conscience in relation to the distinction between universal and particular rules (regulas) such that we understand conscience in the strict sense as concerned with particular rules. The examples of universal rules that Godfrey provides are “do good, avoid evil” and “obey God.” I take such notions as providing further evidence that Godfrey does not regard moral reasoning as directly concerned with the application of abstract general principles, and that we should conceive of his theory of the practical mode of thought as an exploration into how we acquire particular rules. From this perspective, prudence is concerned with correctly relating a particular situation to a particular rule, while conscience is the act of judging that a given action follows from a particular principle or rule. In addition, prudential judgment involves an act of conscience in that it views a particular action as following from some principle, although conscience by itself does not entail either that a particular principle is right, or that one correctly grasps what follows from a specific principle. Godfrey in fact accepts that conscience can be either right or in error, but regards prudence as always right, which I take to mean that the prudent person always ascends to particular rules. This does not mean that a prudent person does not act in accordance with the universal principles of synderesis, but rather that such principles do not necessarily play a central role in deliberation and in how we come to know what we should do in particular situations. Although we may say that conscience applies the principles of synderesis, this process must be understood in respect to the development of particular rules or principles and the practical mode of thought.

VII.2.3 Can actions be good or bad in themselves?

Godfrey asks in Quodl. IV.11 whether something that is bad in itself can be made good in some way, and his initial answer is no. He argues that it is clear from the Decalogue that there are actions that are always wrong, such as is the case with adultery – it is a type of action that is wrong in itself independently of any particular situation. Moreover, we can know this with

472 Quodl. XII.2. (PB 5 84).
473 Hoffmann points out that although Aquinas also uses particular principles at times (ST I.II.54.5 and II.II.47.6), he does not develop this issue in any great detail (Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles,” 176). If I am correct in respect to the connection between practical principles and practical modes of thought, then Godfrey provides a much more detailed picture of these types of rules than Aquinas.
474 Quodl. XII.2 (PB 5 84).
475 Utrum illud quod per se est malum possit aliquo modo fieri bonum?
certainty not only through a consideration of the Decalogue, but also from natural law. We would then not need prudence in order to know whether or not we should engage in adultery, and no experience would be necessary in order to judge correctly in this regard. Godfrey believes he is following Aristotle in this analysis and refers for support to NE II.6 (1107a10–18), where Aristotle states that murder and adultery, for instance, are always wrong.476

Godfrey contrasts such actions that are good or bad in themselves with actions that are good or bad depending on whether they are performed in what scholastic philosophers refer to as the right circumstances. These actions are good only when they are performed in the right way, at the right time, and in the right situation.477 Godfrey maintains that actions which depend on circumstances in this way comprise the type of actions that we need prudence in order to perform correctly.

Godfrey also claims that there is a third type of actions that comprise those that may be regarded as either good or bad in themselves, but with notable exceptions, which can be identified by what he calls a determination of natural law.478 Actions of this type should not be regarded as deducible from the first principles of natural law insofar as people over time have formulated various ways in which to specify natural law in their efforts to formulate good human laws. Such actions will always have exceptions for certain individuals and at certain times.479 Godfrey claims that in order to be a good lawyer, for example, one needs to proceed as a wise person (saepius) would and identify when there is an exception to a general law, which apparently implies that being a good lawyer requires that one possess at least some degree prudence so that they can correctly identify the relevant exceptions. Godfrey would likely regard returning what one has borrowed to be a good thing in itself, and that although this would likely be the case in a majority of situations, there are notable exceptions, such as when it would not be a good thing to return an axe to someone who intends to use it for a violent attack. As a result, returning what we have borrowed is good in itself, but there nevertheless are relatively isolated cases when doing so could be bad.480

Godfrey’s discussion of actions that are good or bad in themselves indicates that his overall view is quite complex, not least in that he is

476 For an analysis of this passage from a particularist perspective, see Leibowitz, “Particularism in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics,” 136.
477 Quodl. IV.11 (PB.2 266).
478 Godfrey here follows Aquinas’s analysis of these issues in ST I.II.94.2.
479 Quodl. IV.11 (PB.2 266).
480 One might object that there seems to be no real differences between actions that are good or bad in themselves, but allow for exceptions, and those that rely on circumstances insofar as both types may be good in one situation and bad in another. My view is that Godfrey wishes to establish a contrast between those actions that are good in most cases and bad only rarely, and those actions that must always be done in the right way and at the right time in order to be good. It is not necessarily a problem for Godfrey if there is no sharp distinction between these two types of actions since only a difference in degree is necessary.
committed to the three broad categories of actions we have noted. These are, first, actions that are always bad, and possibly some that are always good, which are only a small subset of all good and bad actions; second, a presumably larger class of actions that are good or bad in themselves, but have notable exceptions; and third, actions whose goodness or badness depend on how they are performed and in what circumstances, for which we need prudence primarily. How should we regard Godfrey’s account of moral principles as a whole in the light of these three types of actions?

VII.3 Godfrey’s moral principles and contemporary accounts of general principles

We have seen that Godfrey rejects a perceptual model of prudence, arguing that prudential judgment involves what he terms principles (principium) that function as the major premises in practical syllogisms. The contemporary discussion of the role of such principles has become increasingly detailed and complicated, and it serves to render the issue of whether the Aristotelian conception of prudence relies upon general principles more complicated as well.

In order to deal with these issues, it is useful to distinguish between the metaphysical and epistemological role of principles. As Harman states,

> the issues between particularism and generalism are metaphysical, to the extent that they concern the source of moral truths, and epistemic (or psychological), to the extent that they concern the source of reasonable or justified moral decisions and beliefs. ⁴⁸¹

Insofar as general principles may be helpful in describing why something has particular moral properties, such as why a given action is right, we may refer to them as explanatory principles. The fact that a specific action, such as a lie, is wrong can be explained in relation to the principle that *If an action is a lie, then it is wrong*, whereby a general principle explains the moral truth that lying is wrong. ⁴⁸³ The principle in question associates the description of a specific action as a lie with the moral property of wrongness.

Godfrey accepts a number of such principles, such as adultery always being wrong, but this involves only a small subset of all good or bad actions.

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⁴⁸¹ Harman, “Moral Particularism and Transduction,” 44.
⁴⁸² General principles are not necessarily restricted to explaining why a given action is right, but may also explain other moral properties of actions, such as bravery. They may also be extended to involve explanations of other moral properties of states of affairs and emotional attitudes.
⁴⁸³ Such principles are often regarded in contemporary philosophy as bridge laws that connect moral properties with natural properties. For a detailed discussion of moral principles in this sense, see Rosen, “What Is a Moral Law?”
contrast, he argues that there is a great diversity both of actions that are
good/bad in themselves but have notable exceptions, and of actions that
depend upon being done in the right way and in the right situation if they are
to be good. It should be sufficiently clear at this venture that Godfrey would
be critical of attempts to capture the complexity found in morality by a limited
system of exceptionless principles, even though certain contemporary
generalists accept a much larger number of general principles and a large
number of exceptions.

Even though such general principles can be very complex and associated
with a large but specific number of exceptions, a generalist can still maintain
that they are necessary for explaining moral properties. For example, Irwin
argues that Aristotle should be regarded as a generalist because it is in his
view theoretically possible to account for all of the possible exceptions to the
moral principles Aristotle identifies. The idea is that it would also be
theoretically possible to write a long appendix to the *Nicomachean Ethics* that
would specify every principle and account for all of the exceptions. Would
Godfrey agree with such an undertaking? As far as I can tell his views
concerning the nature of prudence are not incompatible with such large and
complex explanatory principles. This question is hard to determine because of
Godfrey’s epistemological focus. How then should we regard the role of
principles in moral knowledge from Godfrey’s perspective?

One might think that principles are necessary for justified moral decisions,
as is the case with a justificatory generalist who believes that such decisions
are based general and exceptionless principles. I maintain that Godfrey’s
idea that prudential judgment has to have a bottom-up structure makes an
important difference for how generalists usually understand the way in which
principles work in respect to justification. Godfrey does not appear to believe
that if we have ascended to a principle in one situation, then we can reliably
act upon that same principle in the future – when in a new situation, we instead
need to reflect upon that situation in the light of previous experience. Doing
the right thing and acting on a certain principle in a given situation adds both
to one’s experience, and to one’s ability to discern the relevant features of a
situation. But there are no assurances that acting upon a given principle in the
future will lead to the right decision.

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484 See McKeever and Ridge, *Principled Ethics*, chap. 6–7, for a detailed discussion of such an
approach.

485 Irwin, “Ethics as an Inexact Science.” See also Nielsen, “Aristotle on Principles in Ethics.”

486 Scotus and his account of moral goodness provides a possibly more metaphysical discussion.
He appears to suggest that rightness is nothing other than an aggregation of what he refers to
as circumstances. This may entail that there are no general principles for describing such ag-
grgregation (*Quodlibet*, 18.6). For a brief discussion of this theory, see Drummond, “John Duns
Scotus on the Role of the Moral Virtues,” 206–09. See also Steele, “Duns Scotus, the Natural
Law, and the Irrelevance of Aesthetic Explanation.”

This does not undermine Godfrey’s position that moral knowledge (*notia*) can be found in particular situations – a moral decision can be justified by virtue of the fact that the current situation is understood in the light of previous experience. The type of principles on which Godfrey relies in his discussion of prudence are regarded as revealing themselves to experienced people when they reflect upon the situation at hand in the light of their experience. Prudence is necessary not only because it facilitates dealing with the diversity of a particular situation when applying principles that have been acquired in some way, it also comprises the ability to grasp the particular situation and form a proper principle concerning it. Stated otherwise, prudence is the ability to judge how everything adds up in the end, to use Dancy’s expression. But while its bottom-up structure ensures that a principle is used correctly in the current situation, this provides at best only an indication that acting on that principle in a future situation might be the right thing to do. Godfrey apparently believes that a prudent person has a grasp of the similarities and differences between particular situations and is able to identify the most important features of each.

We may thus conclude that Godfrey rejects what can be referred to as justificatory generalism. Harman states in this regard that

> Weak epistemic moral particularism says it can be rational directly to reach a verdict on the present case without basing that verdict on a prior acceptance of a general principle.\footnote{Harman, “Moral Particularism and Transduction,” 48.}

Godfrey then appears to be a weak epistemic moral particularist in this specific sense because he maintains that justified moral judgments are possible without a person having to apply some previously held moral principle to a new situation. He instead maintains that one can think of a prudential judgment as sufficiently similar to some previously experienced situation, and that a prudent person can reason in a way that takes into consideration the relevant difference between situations.

Godfrey seems to demand nothing more of a prudent person than the following type of reasoning: In situation S1, feature Q was a reason to \( \phi \), and if S2 is sufficiently similar to situation S1, then Q is a reason to also \( \phi \) in S2. He would not demand that a prudent person’s decisions are justified in respect to some general principle, but rather in relation to their firm grasp of the differences and similarities between particular situations. Godfrey would accept that there are general principles that treat all similar situations alike, but would argue that moral decisions are never justified in respect to such principles.

However, Godfrey cannot be regarded as accepting anything more than \textit{weak} justificatory particularism insofar as he clearly believes that moral decisions can at times be justified in respect to exceptionless principles. We
have seen that Godfrey accepts certain moral absolutes such that a person with no experience is justified, for example, in their decision to not engage in adultery. He would thus accept that given moral decisions are justified because that person knows that a certain action belongs to a type of actions that are always wrong, which is to say that the type of judgment unique to prudence, namely, experience-based judgment, is then not required. Godfrey nevertheless maintains that if we seek moral knowledge as a whole, knowing that a certain type of action is always bad or good is not sufficient.

Furthermore, weak epistemic particularism is also compatible with Godfrey’s acceptance of certain forms of general and abstract principles, such as obey God and do what is just, which are known through synderesis and devoid of much descriptive content. Even if there are no exceptions to the principle “obey God,” what will count as obeying God can vary significantly in different situations. In addition, Godfrey does not have to deny the validity of such general principles as “do what is courageous” since they do not play a role in justifying moral decisions – moral decisions are not justified by reference to such abstract principles. It is not sufficient that we answer the question - Why did you do $\phi$? - by simply stating that doing so is to obey God.

VII.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Godfrey’s account of prudence, arguing that he endorses a bottom-up model whereby prudence relies directly upon experience, not on a theoretical account of morality. His account shares certain similarities with contemporary particularism, although it should be noted that the usefulness of the contemporary terminology of general principles is somewhat limited for gaining an understanding of medieval ethical thought. I have argued that Godfrey adopts a primarily epistemological perspective in that his account of prudence involves an account of moral expertise. While Godfrey’s account may be regarded as a form of epistemological particularism, we cannot determine whether he would have rejected explanatory generalism.

\[489 \text{Quodl. IV.11. (PB.2 264-272).}\]
Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, let me here expand on three central issues that frame the discussion of the dissertation as a whole.

I. The Notion of Goodness and the Irreducibility of Virtue

I have emphasized throughout this discussion the relation between one’s character and one’s actions, and have argued that Aquinas endorses a certain view of virtuous action whereby a certain type of congruence between who one is and what one does is necessary for actions to be perfectly good. In elaborating Aquinas’s position, I argued in Chapter I that he presents an account of the enumeration of the character virtues such that two character virtues are distinct only if there is a difference between them in terms of an aspect of goodness. This view is central to his account of virtuous action insofar as he maintains that an action is virtuous if it possesses a likeness to a virtuous character trait in terms of a specific aspect of goodness.\(^{490}\) I also maintain that Aquinas is best understood as regarding virtuous action as having a certain reflexive aspect such that possessing a character virtue will make a person experience their own actions as appropriate for the type of person they are. This is an element of what is good about virtuous actions.

In addition, I have argued that prudence from this perspective is in fact dependent upon the character virtues insofar as it aims at our performing the best possible actions, which is not possible if we do not possess these virtues. This view enables Aquinas to counter the objection that prudence requires nothing more than being continent, that is, not being influenced by one’s emotions. Aquinas places great value upon acting in agreement with one’s good character, which is then the aim of prudence.

When virtue is viewed in this manner, we do not need virtues simply because they make good actions easier, or because they make it possible for us to manage our emotions, but rather because they contribute to the character of good actions. An analysis of virtue is then an irreducible element of an analysis of good action.

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\(^{490}\) Aquinas maintains that we may use term virtuous action to describe actions that make us virtuous. I have referred to this above as type 1 virtuous action.

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One might at this point, object that Aquinas’s focus is misplaced, and that this type of congruence between one’s actions and one’s character does not matter to the goodness of our actions. It should be noted, however, that the view I have attributed to Aquinas is distinct from contemporary attempts to render virtue foundational in ethics. Aquinas does not appear to believe that we can define right actions in terms of what a virtuous person would do insofar as virtue is instead an element of the analysis of perfect action. Performing a right action is from Aquinas’s perspective merely the first step towards performing a virtuous action as well as a perfectly good action.

II. The Possibility of a Successful Argument

The idea that we cannot possess a given character virtue perfectly without also possessing the other character virtues perfectly has struck many as a far-fetched claim. This dissertation has shown that such an impression is not without justification insofar as the type of considerations often presented in support of the connection of the virtues never appear to indicate anything more than what I have referred to as *Weak Connection* (for example, that we learn virtue in connection with each other and not having a virtue will lead us act against other virtues).

I have shown, however, that there is a way in which to formulate a valid argument for what I have termed *Strong Global Connection*. Almost all aspects of which are contentious. I have argued that relies upon demonstrating a certain type of mutual dependence between prudence and the character virtues. In this respect, prudence makes a disposition for good actions into a virtue, while the character virtues make the ability for rationally informed action into prudence. Possessing prudence would then mean that one possesses all the other character virtues.

I have further shown that this argument as a whole also requires that we understand virtue in a specific manner. First, we would need to regard the character virtues as indivisible in the sense that if a person fails in one area concerning a given character virtue, then they fail in all areas that are relevant to that virtue. The failure is really total and all-encompassing as regards to the virtue in question. This comprises a type of holistic analysis of character traits such that we cannot acquire merely one part of a given character virtue, for example, courage. Aquinas maintains that there is no such thing as being partly courageous, and that if we succeed in one situation and fail in another, it is not that we are fully virtuous in the first, but not virtuous in the second. While we may possess courage only to some extent, the level of courage is the same in all the situations in which courage is relevant, and the degree to which we are courageous is evaluated in relation to how we act in different situations as a whole. I have endeavored to show that there is some reason for
viewing virtue along such lines, which are directly related to Aquinas’s account of acting in agreement with a virtue. These reasons come into view when we attend to his account of acting in agreement with a virtue. If a person acts a good way in one situation but fails in another, she does not act in accordance with her virtuous character in the situation.

A further, more problematic aspect of Aquinas’s argument is that he appears to extend this type of analysis to prudence without any further argumentation. He thus assumes that we cannot possess perfect prudence in relation to courage without also possessing it, for example, in relation to moderation. This view is necessary for Aquinas to infer that a failure in prudence in respect to a given character virtue entails failure in respect to all.

I have shown that the types of consideration which Aquinas presents do not support the notion that prudence is indivisible in this sense, and that he simply assumes such indivisibility as he argues only that prudence is a single virtue. Aquinas’s argument is thus not successful since what he actually argues for is not what he needs to demonstrate. I also have argued that happiness as a final end cannot account for the indivisibility of prudence in a relevant sense and have drawn attention to the fact that Aquinas never claims it does. As a result, I conclude that Aquinas fails to defend Strong Global Connection.

Arguably, then, there is a lacuna in Aquinas’s account and from this perspective, Godfrey makes a significant and substantial contribution to the debate. I have focused in the present discussion on two features of his account, namely, Essentialism and Virtue Holism.

In respect to the first of these, I have argued that Godfrey’s explicitly essentialist framework provides a means for explaining why the connection of the character virtues does not lead to a denial of the plurality of the character virtues. The distinctness of courage, for example, would then not be undermined by its being connected with the virtue of moderation. Even if the character virtues are necessarily connected, they would still be distinct dispositions with their own essential and defining characteristics. In contrast, prudence and the character virtues are essentially dependent upon each other in ways in which the character virtues amongst themselves are not. Courage, for example, is not an element of what makes moderation into a virtue.

Concerning the second issue, I have argued that Godfrey endorses what we may term virtue holism, whereby he believes that it is part of the scope of prudence to assess the specific relationships between the distinct character virtues. This would account for why we cannot acquire prudence in respect to moderation, but not in respect to courage, and also indicate how prudence is indivisible in the sense that we cannot possess only a part of it, such as that which pertains to courage. In this regard, an inclination towards certain acts is a virtuous inclination only if it fits within a suitable whole that includes the other virtuous inclinations as well. Godfrey views prudence as similar to
medicine in this respect insofar as prudence involves a type of judgement similar to that of a doctor when he takes the body in its entirety into consideration when treating some part of it.

The analysis I present in this dissertation also provides a means for understanding the various disputes concerning the connection of the virtues in medieval philosophy. I have focused on the indivisibility of the virtues as central to Aquinas’s and Godfrey’s arguments, and have maintained that if one does not accept such a view of virtue, one also has little reason to accept Strong Global Connection. Taking such an approach to the debate as a whole reveals how both sides present arguments that support their positions. It also illustrates that the debate is not driven association between the connection of the character virtues and the role of happiness in ethics since, as I have pointed out, it is possible to regard happiness as the final end of human life while denying Strong Global Connection.

III. Experience-based moral epistemology

In the final chapter of the dissertation I directly explore Godfrey’s view of prudence. He maintains that prudence begins with a careful judgement about the particular situation, and that from such judgments we ascend to correct principles. Moreover, he argues that a specific and essential feature of this ability is gained from experience. Is Godfrey an anomaly in his times, or are other thinkers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries also attracted to experience-based moral epistemology? To answer this question, more research is required, and in particular we need to know more about the role of experience in ethical theory in the successors of Godfrey. Many questions about how medieval thinkers might conceive of the acquisition of moral knowledge through experience remain to be answered, and undertaking an effort to do so will require a future study on the role of experience in ethical theory after Godfrey. Can we think about moral expertise the way we think about the skill exhibited by a good artist? I believe that my discussion of Godfrey shows the need for such an investigation.
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