

The Virtue of Temperance and Human Dignity

Resumo

O autor começa identificando quatro elementos necessários para uma compreensão adequada da dignidade humana: três vêm como dons do Criador - a dignidade de ser pessoas inteligentes e livres, a nossa vocação para a comunhão com Deus e a dignidade de sermos incorporados em Cristo pela graça; o quarto é adquirido através duma vida de ação moralmente boa - é a dignidade de obedecer à lei de Deus e isto encontra a sua plena realização no amor a Deus e ao próximo.

O autor continua com uma explicação acerca da natureza da temperança. A posse desta virtude significa que os desejos para os prazeres dos sentidos e a alegria que deles provém estão em harmonia com a razão. A temperança implica a transformação do apetite concupiscível, de modo que este viva em obediência dócil e pronta à razão. Em outras palavras: a temperança implica ordem e harmonia no apetite concupiscível. A continência, segundo Santo Tomás, é uma virtude menos perfeita, pela qual a vontade controla os desejos veementes do apetite concupiscível.

A pessoa que, pela graça de Deus e pelo esforço próprio, cresceu na virtude da temperança terá uma apreciação profunda da dignidade que temos de ser criados “à imagem e semelhança de Deus”. Será assim porque, livre dos desejos excessivos dos prazeres dos sentidos, ela verá a pessoa humana como espiritual, i. é, como inteligente e livre. A posse desta virtude a libertará do apego desordenado aos prazeres dos sentidos. É precisamente em libertar que a temperança é ‘amiga’. Livre através desta virtude, a pessoa terá mais facilidade em exercer as outras três virtudes cardiais e em viver uma vida integralmente humana. Com tal liberdade ela se empenhará com mais alegria no progresso das ciências e assim crescerá nas três virtudes intelectuais. Gozará também daquela liberdade interior que é tão necessária para a cooperação com a graça sobrenatural e, assim, alcançará a dignidade que se encontra em observar o mandamento divino do amor.

Introduction

It is seldom, nowadays, to find any sort of ethical reflection that does not refer to the dignity of the human person. Appeals from all sorts of international, state and philanthropic bodies inevitably make some reference to human dignity. The Church, likewise, and more especially the Holy Father, never tires of promoting the true dignity of man and woman.

The aim of this article is to explore the relationship between this dignity and the virtue of temperance. We will discover that temperance is, so to speak, the first ‘friend’ of human dignity, and that its opposite, intemperance, is the most basic enemy of the dignity of men and women.

Our article will be divided into four parts: the first aims at a more profound understanding of the dignity or excellence of the human person; the second part will be dedicated to understanding the transforming power of the virtue of temperance; thirdly, to further highlight the importance of this virtue, we will compare it to continence; our fourth and final section will be specifically dedicated to the relationship that exists between temperance and human dignity.

I. Human Dignity as “grounded and brought to perfection in God”¹

To understand the dignity of the human person we will look principally to the Vatican Council’s *Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)* and to the first chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* which bears the title *The Dignity of the Human Person*. These documents point to four elements which furnish us with an adequate understanding of the expression *human dignity*.

1. Human Dignity based on intelligence and freedom

Dignitatis Humanae opens with the words:

Contemporary man is becoming increasingly conscious of the dignity of the human person; more and more people are demanding that men should exercise fully their own judgement and a responsible freedom in their actions and should not be subject to the pressure of coercion but be inspired by a sense of duty².

These words imply that men in general are becoming more conscious of the dignity that each person, in virtue of being a person, enjoys. As such

¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World - Gaudium et Spes* (= GS), in *Vatican Council II - The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, General Editor: Austin Flannery, Collegeville 1975, n. 21c, 920.

² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Declaration on Religious Liberty- Dignitatis Humanae* (= DH), in *Vatican Council II - The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Collegeville 1975, n. 1a, 799.

everyone should have due freedom. All should be allowed to act in a way to which they can personally respond. No one should be coerced to act against his conscience.

That *all* men, in virtue of being rational, enjoy a dignity specific to the human person, becomes even more clear when we read:

It is in accordance with their dignity that all men, because they are persons, that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore bearing personal responsibility, are both impelled by their nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth³.

This human dignity precedes one's use of reason and free will. In virtue of it all are impelled and obliged to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They bear responsibility for their moral actions.

In these paragraphs *human dignity* refers to an excellence that all men have in virtue of their human nature. It is the *conditio sine qua non* for a moral life, for a life of responsible action. Such a dignity gives to all men a right to freedom of religion which "cannot be interfered with as long as the just requirements of public order are observed"⁴. Without any doubt the finality of this dignity, and the freedom of conscience that results from it, is man's moral perfection. It is only by acting freely that man can really act morally. It is therefore only by allowing the freedom that is in harmony with human dignity that man can act *as man*, and thereby reach the perfection to which his nature is ordered.

Gaudium et Spes tells us that man is made in the image and likeness of God: 'For sacred Scripture teaches that man was created "to the image of God," as able to know and love his creator ...'⁵. He possesses an essential goodness which places him above all visible creation: "Man is not deceived when he regards himself as superior to bodily things ... For by his power to know himself in the depths of his being he rises above the whole universe of mere objects"⁶. The true greatness of man therefore consists in his spiritual nature. It is this that allows him to enter communion with God and thereby raises him above the rest of visible creation.

³ DH 2b (Flannery, 801).

⁴ DH 2b (Flannery, 801).

⁵ GS 12c (Flannery, 913).

⁶ GS 14b (Flannery, 915).

2. Human Dignity based on man's vocation

Speaking of the 'communion with God' to which man is ordered introduces us to the second element of our understanding of human dignity: "The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God"⁷. Men's greatness is seen when we contemplate the heights to which they are called - to "become partakers of the divine nature" (1 Pt 1,4). Further on, still in dialogue with the reality of atheism, the same document affirms that "when ... man is left ... without hope of eternal life his dignity is deeply wounded"⁸. Man therefore loses sight of his own worth, of his greatness, when he loses sight of his vocation to eternal life with God, when he fails to recognise that his "dignity is ... brought to perfection in God"⁹.

The affirmation that man's dignity "rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God"¹⁰, and not principally in his being created with intelligence and freedom, seems unreasonable without taking into consideration that "all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine"¹¹. It must be clear that our vocation to communion with God is the very reason why we were created with the "natural dignity" of being intelligent and free. Calling man to divine union was not an afterthought of God. It was rather His first intention. His creating man in His own image - with intelligence and freedom - was at the service of man's divine vocation. It is for this reason that *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that our human dignity rests above all on our vocation to communion with God.

3. Human Dignity elevated in Christ

The very vocation of man can be said to have its own dignity. It is the most worthy, most elevated vocation that man could possibly enjoy. But the fullness of this vocation is only seen in Christ. Without the Incarnation man would not understand the greatness to which he is called. It is for this reason that we believe that it is Christ who reveals man to man: "Christ the Lord,

⁷ GS 19a (Flannery, 918).

⁸ GS 21c (Flannery, 921).

⁹ GS 21c (Flannery, 920).

¹⁰ GS 19a (Flannery, 918).

¹¹ GS 22e (Flannery, 924).

Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling”¹². The third element of our understanding of human dignity is therefore seen when we reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation: “Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare”¹³. The dignity of the Christian receives strong witness from St. Leo the Great:

Christian, recognise your dignity and, now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God¹⁴.

Here we see that man receives a supernatural excellence by being incorporated into Christ. All the baptised enjoy this dignity. However, it is possible to act in accordance with this new dignity or to “return to your former base condition by sinning”. This dignity is somehow *in potency* until one *actualises* it through virtuous action.

4. Human Dignity realised in Virtuous Action

In virtue of his spiritual soul man comes to know the truth, even the truth of that which is beyond the senses. He recognises a law which does not come from himself: “Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey”¹⁵. He is therefore called to obey a law which has been inscribed on his heart by God: “For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God”¹⁶, and: “His dignity lies in observing this law”¹⁷. It is therefore by obeying God’s law, by acting in accordance with reason, by acting in a way that is virtuous, that man discovers his dignity.

¹² GS 22a (Flannery, 922).

¹³ GS 22b (Flannery, 922).

¹⁴ LEO THE GREAT, Sermo 21 in nativitate Domini, cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (= CCC), n.1691.

¹⁵ GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

¹⁶ GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

¹⁷ GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

This gives us a fourth element in our understanding of the expression *human dignity*. Here dignity does not refer to the basic excellence that is associated with human nature itself, which is the capacity to know and act freely. Nor does it refer to our vocation to “communion with God”, nor to our ‘elevation in Christ’, but rather to our acting in a way which corresponds to these three truths.

Man can, of course, obey God’s law naturally or supernaturally. Hence there are two potential dignities in question here: the dignity of the person who obeys God’s law naturally - this being an imperfect realisation of the dignity inherent in virtuous action; the dignity of the person who obeys God’s law supernaturally - this being, in this life, the full realisation of the dignity we reach through virtuous action.

It should, of course, be mentioned that the dignity of obeying God’s law has its own special dimension - it increases by obeying this law. In the supernatural life, this is so, of course, because by acts of virtue we merit an increase in grace, which means that our participation in the divine nature increases.

As this *human dignity* is an excellence that is enjoyed by those who obey God’s law, when man refuses to follow God’s law, he acts unreasonably and is somehow *less than* human. He acts in a way which is not only inconvenient to human nature, but also beneath the supernatural dignity to which he is called. Expressions such as, “he reacted with dignity”, “he is a person of great dignity” or, “he has lost his dignity”, reflect this meaning of the expression *human dignity*.

Gaudium et Spes affirms:

Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward towards his goal by freely choosing what is good, and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end¹⁸.

Man therefore *gains* a dignity by freeing himself from slavery to the passions, and by choosing means and acts which are truly good and ordered to his end. Such a dignity would therefore not necessarily be enjoyed by all men. Those who act in accordance with the impulses of disordered passions are beneath such a dignity, even though they still possess the dignity of being “persons, that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore bearing personal responsibility”¹⁹. They possess that human excellence which demands that they strive for their true fulfilment and therefore must be allowed to act rationally and freely. However, they have not yet achieved that dignity which is associated with “freely choosing what is good”.

From *Gaudium et Spes* it is clear that we gain a dignity by observing the law inscribed in our hearts by God. That such dignity is not only achieved by observing the natural law becomes very clear when we consider that our vocation to communion with God in Christ²⁰ is the foundation stone on which our dignity primarily rests. The dignity which we gain must therefore also be dependant on our adhering to the law “which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one’s neighbour”²¹, this love of God, and of neighbour for God’s sake, clearly referring to the supernatural love of the New Testament²².

Gaudium et Spes, after having affirmed that our dignity in “grounded and brought to perfection in God”, goes on to explain: it is grounded in God as “man has in fact been placed in society by God, who created him as an intelligent and free being”; it is perfected in God as “over and above this he [man] is called as a son to intimacy with God and to share in his happiness”²³. As this happiness is only achieved through a life of supernatural virtue we see that man’s dignity reaches its perfection in a life of such virtue. The dignity that we gain by “freely choosing what is good”²⁴ is therefore gained by practising the supernatural virtues, and especially that of charity.

5. Synthesising

We could now pose the question: ought we speak of “four dignities” of the human person or could we identify a common element which unites the four elements that we have mentioned. It seems that all four are associated with man’s being an image of God. As a person, that is, as a being who can act consciously and freely, he is already an image of God Who is Supreme Intelligence and Freedom.

But man was given intelligence and freedom for a purpose, so that he would respond to his vocation of becoming a partaker “of the divine nature”

¹⁸ GS 17 (Flannery, 917).

¹⁹ DH 2b (Flannery, 801).

²⁰ Cf. GS 19a (Flannery, 918), 21c (Flannery, 920-921) and CCC n. 1691.

²¹ GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

²² Cf. GS 16, footnote n. 11 (Flannery, 916), which refers us to Mt 22,37-40 and Gal 5,14

²³ GS 21c (Flannery, 920-921).

²⁴ GS 17, (Flannery, 917).

(II Pt 1,4), and thereby share eternal life with God, where we “shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (I Jn 3,2). Man’s being an image of God does not only consist in his intelligence and freedom, but is also associated with his being called to share in the very life of God, in his vocation to “see Him as He is”.

But this vocation is realised in Christ. It is He who came that we would “have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10,10). In Christ we do not only see our vocation, but our divinisation is made real. In Christ our being an “image of God” reaches a new and true fulfilment even in this life. It is through Him that we actually begin to share in “the divine nature”.

Being created as persons intelligent and free we are capable of acting in a morally good way, capable of performing acts of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance - we are morally good *in potency*. Being called to eternal life and being incorporated into Christ we are capable of performing acts of supernatural virtue, capable of participating in acts which presuppose a share in divine life: we can believe in divinely revealed truths; hope to see God face to face; and love with the love of God (cf. Rm 5,5). The capacity to perform such acts clearly shows that, in Christ, ‘human nature has been raised to a dignity beyond compare’²⁵. We now participate in a truly sublime way in the intelligence and freedom of God. We are now capable of acting in a way that is even more Godlike than is the person who does not share in the dignity of the sons of God.

By performing such acts we move from being morally good supernaturally *in potency* to being morally good supernaturally *in act*. In other words: we are not just capable of being good, we are actually good. Here we see how we can begin to enjoy the dignity that man gains when “ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward towards his goal by freely choosing what is good”²⁶, a dignity that ‘lies in observing God’s law’²⁷. By performing such acts we become ever more like God. Our being an image of God somehow goes from “capacity to realisation”, or in more classical terms, “from potency to act”. This does not deny that we are created in the image of God. We are indeed images of God as intelligent and free persons. It is this that confers on us our most basic dignity. However our “imaging of God” reaches a new height through Jesus Christ who enables us to act in a

²⁵ Cf. GS 22b (Flannery, 922-23).

more Godlike manner. This confers on us a new dignity. But by acting in a way that is Godlike (cf. Eph 5,1), by being ‘perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect’ (cf. Mt 6,48), our “imaging of God” in this life comes to perfection, and we gain the dignity that ‘lies in observing God’s law’. It is therefore in being “image of God” that our dignity consists.

6. Trinitarian Synthesis

The doctrine contained in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and explained briefly above can also be seen to have a Trinitarian foundation. Our creation, being the first work of God, is attributed to God the Father. Therefore, our most basic dignity, the dignity of being intelligent and free persons, can be seen as a reflection of the work of God the Father. Our vocation to communion with God comes through the Word made Flesh, and our capacity to realise this vocation comes through our incorporation into Him through the Sacraments of Initiation. Through Christ we begin to image God even more perfectly and thereby gain a new dignity, the dignity of sons in the Son. This new dignity is however ordered to action, i.e., to the performing of acts of virtue, especially acts of faith, hope and charity. In other words, our dignity in Christ is ordered towards our sanctification, and as our sanctification is principally a work of love, it is attributed to the Holy Spirit. The dignity of the man who obeys God’s law can therefore be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Our dignity as human persons lies not only in our being images of the One God, but in our reflecting the life of the Blessed Trinity.

7. “Honesty” and “Spiritual Beauty” in St. Thomas

St. Thomas begins his entire moral theology by reminding us that man, being made in the image of God, has intelligence and free will, and as such is the principle of his own acts²⁸. We can therefore see how the angelic doctor begins his theology of human action by an implicit but clear reference to the

²⁶ GS 17 (Flannery, 917).

²⁷ Cf. GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

²⁸ Cf. I-II, Prologus: “Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, id est homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem”.

dignity enjoyed by every human person. Neither should it surprise us to find in his moral thought reference to the dignity enjoyed by those who obey God’s law. While not finding a use of the expression “dignity” in this context, the same reality is expressed by such terms as “honour” and “spiritual beauty”.

St. Thomas tells us that one is worthy of honour if one is honest. Honour, however, is due to excellence. And as the greatest excellence of all is virtue, honour is primarily due to virtue. For this reason he concludes that honesty is the same as virtue: “Therefore, properly speaking, honesty refers to the same thing as virtue”²⁹.

In the next article we are told honesty is the same as spiritual beauty. As physical beauty consists in the body having a certain proportion and a clarity due to colour, likewise, the beauty of the soul consists in man’s conduct or actions being in proportion to the clarity of reason. But as this is what is meant by honesty, and as honesty is the same as virtue, we see that Thomas understands spiritual beauty, honesty and virtue to refer to the same reality³⁰.

For this reason it seems possible to say that the *spiritual beauty* or *honesty* of St. Thomas corresponds to the fulfilment of human dignity which we saw through *Gaudium et Spes*. This dignity is gained by man’s obeying God’s law, overcoming slavery to the passions, freely choosing what is good and thereby coming to his true end. Fulfilling such requirements involves not only reaching one’s true dignity, but also acting virtuously and thereby becoming spiritually beautiful. Hence, there seems to be a close correspondence, if not identity, between the dignity of the human person as understood by *Gaudium et Spes* and honour or beauty as understood by St. Thomas.

II. The Virtue of Temperance as Transformation

To understand the virtue of temperance we must first identify its object, its matter, i.e., that with which it deals. St. Thomas tells us that it is principally about those passions which tend towards the sensible good: “temper-

²⁹ II-II, q.145, a.1, c: “Et ideo honestum, proprie loquendo, in idem refertur cum virtute”. All English quotations of the Summa Theologiae are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Province, New York 1947.

³⁰ Cf. II-II, q.145, a.2, c: “Et similiter pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualem rationis claritatem. Hoc autem pertinet ad rationem honesti, quod diximus idem esse virtuti, quae secundum rationem moderatur omnes res humanas”.

ance, which denotes a kind of moderation, is chiefly concerned with those passions that tend towards sensible goods, viz. desire and pleasure”³¹. In other and more simple words, the virtue of temperance moderates our desire for things which give pleasure to the senses, but principally it moderates desire for the pleasures of touch - namely the desire that man takes in eating, drinking and sexual activity³². Temperance further moderates the pleasure we take in such goods.

We also need to identify its subject, i.e., we must discover in what dimension of the human personality is this virtue “seated”. St. Thomas might surprise some by affirming that this virtue is not situated in the will, but in the concupiscible power - he speaks of “the concupiscible faculty, subject of *temperance*”³³. Simplifying, we could say: the virtue of temperance is found in that part of the human soul which inclines us to desire and take pleasure in goods of the senses.

As we are seeing, St. Thomas sees an inseparable link between the human passions and this virtue. For this reason we will now treat of these passions in a more systematic way.

1. The Passions of the Human Soul

St. Thomas speaks of eleven passions of the human soul, each passion being “*a movement of the sensitive appetite when we imagine good or evil*”³⁴. A very simple example will help to illustrate: when a man is confronted with or simply imagines a bar of chocolate his sensitive appetite is moved. We could say that he experiences a movement towards the chocolate. With this simple example we begin our encounter with the concupiscible appetite. The object of the concupiscible appetite is the sensible good or the sensible

³¹ II-II, q.141, a.3, c: “ita etiam temperantia, quae importat moderationem quandam, praecipue consistit circa passiones tendentes in bona sensibilia, scilicet circa concupiscentiam et delectationem”.

³² Cf. II-II, q.141, a.4, c: “Et ideo circa delectationes ciborum et potuum, et circa delectationes venereorum, est proprie temperantia. Huiusmodi autem delectationes consequitur sensum tactus. Unde relinquitur quod temperantia sit circa delectationes tactus”.

³³ I-II, q.61, a.2, c: “concupiscibilem, quae est subiectum temperantiae”.

³⁴ I-II, q.22, a.3, sc: “Passio est motus appetitivae virtutis sensibilis in imaginatione boni vel mali”.

evil simply speaking³⁵. This concupiscible appetite spontaneously moves towards the sensitive good - the bar of chocolate, the beautiful woman or the beautiful music. Likewise the concupiscible appetite spontaneously moves away from what the senses perceive as bad - poorly cooked food, the person whose face has been deformed in an accident or the screeching sound of chalk on the blackboard.

Our concupiscible potency is however a little more complicated than it might appear at first sight. In it - with respect to the good object - we encounter three different but closely related passions. These three passions are based on the power that the sensible good (keep thinking on that bar of chocolate!) has of moving the appetitive potency. It moves this potency in three ways:

Firstly it causes a certain aptitude in this potency. In other words, through our first contacts with chocolate, through our first acts of eating chocolate, the chocolate gives us an aptitude to move towards itself. It causes in us a certain inclination towards itself. There now exists a certain connaturality between our appetitive potency and chocolate. There always existed in this potency the capacity to receive this inclination. But now, through our first 'encounters' with chocolate, it actually loves chocolate. This inclination pertains to the passion of *love*. As and from now, at any time of the day, one can truthfully say, "I love chocolate". Even if one is fast asleep, it remains true to say, "he really loves chocolate". His encounter with chocolate has changed something in him. There now exists, in his appetitive potency, a basic inclination towards or, connaturality with, chocolate. We could say "he has begun a relationship with chocolate!";

Secondly, if this good is not possessed it gives this potency the movement of *tending* towards its acquisition. This movement pertains to the passion of *desire* or *concupiscence*. Here we are dealing with the desire that ones experiences to actually eat the chocolate. That this second passion, called *desire* or *concupiscence*, is different from the passion of love is seen in that one continues loving the sensitive good, even when one does not actually desire to have it in the "here and now";

³⁵I-II, q.23, a.1, c: "... obiectum potentiae concupiscibilis est bonum vel malum sensibile simpliciter acceptum, quod est delectabile vel dolorosum".

Thirdly, when the good is possessed, it gives quietness or repose to the appetite. This pertains to the passion of *joy* or *delight*. The one who is actually in possession of the good, be it by eating chocolate, seeing the beloved, or listening to beautiful music, experiences the passion of *joy* or *delight*.

Within concupiscence there are therefore three passions which are related to the sensible good, each of these receiving its specific object from the manner in which the concupiscible power is moved by its common object, i.e., the sensible good³⁶.

There are also three corresponding ways in which this potency relates to the sensitive evil. On being confronted with the evil it first experiences the passion of *hatred*. This gives rise to the inclination to move away from this evil - this inclination being the passion of *aversion*. Finally, if the evil is present, the soul experiences the passion of *sorrow*.

The remaining five passions are found, not in the concupiscible, but in the irascible appetite. This refers to the arduous good and the arduous evil, and goes beyond the scope of the present investigation³⁷.

³⁶ I-II, q.23, a.4, c: “Bonum ergo primo quidem in potentia appetitiva causat quandam inclinationem, seu aptitudinem, seu connaturalitatem ad bonum: quod pertinet ad passionem amoris. Cui per contrarium respondit odium, ex parte mali. - Secundo, si bonum sit nondum habitum, dat ei motum ad assequendum bonum amatum: et hoc pertinet ad passionem desiderii vel concupiscentiae. Et ex opposito, ex parte mali, est fuga vel abominatio. - Tertio, cum adeptum fuerit bonum, dat appetitus quietationem quandam in ipso bono adepto: et hoc pertinet ad delectionem vel gaudium. Cui opponitur ex parte mali, dolor vel tristitia.”

³⁷ Our experience tells us that the concupiscible appetite on its own does not fully explain the life of our passions. We see this in that it is often difficult to obtain the sensible good or avoid the sensible evil. The acquiring of the good or the avoiding of the evil can involve something which is repugnant to the concupiscible appetite. Nevertheless we experience a desire to continue our pursuit. As this pursuit involves going against the inclinations of the concupiscible appetite the only way that it can be explained is by asserting that there exists another appetite, namely the irascible appetite.

The good recognised as difficult to obtain or the evil recognised as difficult to avoid is in fact the object of the irascible appetite: “this very good or evil, inasmuch as it is of an arduous or difficult nature, is the object of the irascible faculty” (I-II, q.23, a.1, c). It is precisely the element of arduousness in the good or evil that makes it the object of this faculty.

This irascible has five appetites: The arduous good, in as much as it is good, causes a movement towards itself. This movement pertains to the passion of hope. However, in as

2. Concupiscence transformed by the Virtue of Temperance

a) Is Temperance in the Will?

A classical definition of virtue tells us that it is a “*a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us*”³⁸. Implicit in this definition, is that the mind, the spiritual part of man, is the subject of virtue. The virtue of temperance would therefore seem to have the mind or reason, or the appetite of the reason, namely the will, as its subject.

This could lead us to the conclusion that the senses powers as such are not capable of true virtuous formation. At best the mind and will would exercise a certain despotic control over human emotion. Reason would act like a tyrant governing unwilling citizens. The eleven passions would therefore at best be seen as being similar to controlled, but unwilling, citizens. As such they could not be said to be virtuous.

We can respond to such a view by referring to the *Prima Secundae*. We will look to the fourth article of Question 56 on the passions of the soul as the subject of the virtues. There we see first in what sense the appetites can be said to be subjects of virtue, and secondly we will see, that if human action is to be perfect, it is necessary that these faculties be the subjects of virtue.

much as it is arduous or difficult, it causes a movement away from itself. This movement belongs to the passion of despair (cf. I-II, q.23, a.2, c).

The arduous evil, in as much as it is evil, has reason to be avoided. It therefore causes a movement away from itself. In this movement we recognise the passion of fear. However the arduous evil also has reason to be confronted, as only by doing so can one avoid subjection to the evil. This movement towards the arduous evil is the passion of audacity or courage (cf. I-II, q.23, a.2, c).

The last of the five irascible passions is anger. It does not refer to a difficult good or evil which is a future possibility, rather it is the movement that the soul experiences ‘when what we love is under attack’. It “is caused by a difficult evil already present” (cf. I-II, q.23, a.3, c).

b) The Sensitive Appetites as Potential Subjects of Virtue

The concupiscible and irascible appetites can be viewed in two ways. They can be seen in themselves, i.e., as parts of the sensitive appetite. As such they are not the seats of virtue. This can be clearly seen in that animals, who are incapable of virtue - virtue being a good of reason - also have a sensitive appetite. Looked on therefore as spontaneous movements towards sensitive goods or away from sensitive evils the appetites are not the seats of virtue. In this point it is possible that we have found how Thomas would support the argument that temperance cannot be in the concupiscible appetite itself.

Secondly, and in another way, the passions can be considered in as much as they are capable of participating in reason: “they can be considered as participating in the reason, from the fact that they have a natural aptitude to obey reason”³⁹. Our experience confirms that our passions are capable of participating in reason. We could say that our appetites can be formed, modified or moulded by reason. An example of this can be seen in the transformation of a person who has a strong desire, even a craving for certain food or drink. If, on recognising that this desire is not reasonable, and that in satisfying it he is not serving his own best interests, he actually decides to abstain from this good or to use it in a more moderate way, with time he will find that his desire for this good has decreased. In some way a transformation has come about in his sensitive appetite. It no longer has the same exaggerated longings that it had in the past. Its desires are now more reasonable. We can truly say that it participates in the good of reason, *id est*, it now desires in a measure that is determined by reason. It therefore does not just obey reason like an unwilling citizen. It has somehow internalised or interiorised the reasonable measure. It now desires only what reason desires.

³⁸ I-II, q.55, a.4, argumentum: “Virtus est bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur, qua nullus male utitur, quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur”.

³⁹ I-II, q.56, a.4, c: “Alio modo possunt considerari in quantum participant rationem, per hoc quod natae sunt rationi obedire”.

We can therefore agree with the conclusion that Thomas comes to: “the irascible or concupiscible power can be the subject of human virtue”⁴⁰. They have a natural aptitude to obey reason, and once this obedience has been internalised they become the principles of truly human (virtuous) acts⁴¹. It only remains to be said that the element of reason must always be present. Even if one does acquire the habit of enjoying sensual goods in the right measure, it will always be necessary to choose that measure as in doing so one acts reasonably.

c) The Sensitive Appetite’s Need of Virtue

Now that we have seen how it is possible for the passions to be subjects of virtue, we will next see why it is necessary for them to be subjects of virtue if human action is to be perfect. Comparing the work of an artist to the action of a virtuous man, Thomas says that the artist’s work is only perfect if both he and the instrument he uses have each their own perfection. Likewise those human actions, which have both reason and the sensitive powers as their principles, will only be perfect if both of these powers have their own proper perfection, if both are well disposed towards the action.

Concupiscence receives this disposition by being conformed to reason, which is the principle mover in the virtuous action:

And since the good disposition of the power which moves through being moved, depends on its conformity with the power that moves it: therefore the virtue which is in the irascible and concupiscible powers is nothing else but a certain habitual conformity of these powers to reason⁴².

If therefore the concupiscible appetite is not conformed to reason it is like an unfitting instrument and the action of the human person will be im-

⁴⁰ I-II, q.56, a.4, c: “irascibilis vel concupiscibilis potest esse subiectum virtutis humanae”.

⁴¹ I-II, q.56, a.4, c: “sic enim est principium humani actus, inquantum participat rationem”.

⁴² I-II, q.56, a.4, c: “Et quia bona dispositio potentiae moventis motae, attenditur secundum conformitatem ad potentiam moventem; ideo virtus quae est in irascibili et concupiscibili, nihil aliud est quam quaedam habitualis conformitas istarum potentiarum ad rationem”.

perfect. This helps us to see that if human action is to be perfect, it is necessary that all the principles of this action have their own perfection. The concupiscible appetite must therefore be the subject of a moral perfection.

Here we could also point out that it is only when the concupiscible and irascible appetites are, in themselves, conformed to reason, will the person be able to take complete delight and satisfaction in the exercise of the virtues. Otherwise, man would be in a continual state of frustration. In a word, the moral life would amount to a life of violent emotional neurosis.

d) Temperance has as its Subject the Concupiscible Appetite

We have already seen that the object of temperance is the desire for and delight in those goods towards which the concupiscible appetite is inclined. This appetite must be moderated so as to be conformed to reason. It is now only left to be said that when this conformation has taken place the concupiscible appetite itself becomes the subject or “seat” of the virtue of temperance. This modification comes about through repeated acts which are in harmony with reason. Temperance is therefore the virtue which perfects this faculty of the soul. That concupiscence is the subject of temperance is stated explicitly by Thomas when he speaks of “the concupiscible faculty, subject of *temperance*”⁴³.

Other authors confirm that temperance has the concupiscible power as its subject. Prümmer says: “The proximate subject of the virtue of temperance understood in its strict sense is the concupiscible appetite as subject to the reason and will of man”⁴⁴. Cessario, while not stating explicitly that temperance has the concupiscible appetite as its subject, leaves no doubt but that he sees this to be the most reasonable position. He states that the sensible ‘powers constitute true “seats” for virtue’⁴⁵, and rejects the possibility of the virtues of temperance and fortitude residing in the will, as this would imply that there is no real transformation of these emotions. He speaks of a

⁴³ I-II, q.61, a.2, c: “concupiscibilem, quae est subiectum temperantiae”.

⁴⁴ D. M. PRÜMMER, *Handbook of Moral Theology*, Translated by G.W. Shelton, New York 1957, n. 485, 222.

⁴⁵ R. CESSARIO, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, Notre Dame 1991, 64.

more “optimistic proposal for living a holy life”⁴⁶ which includes a modification of the emotional life of man. He thereby clearly shows that he holds that the concupiscible and irascible appetites can be transformed by becoming the subjects of the virtues of temperance and fortitude.

e) Temperance as Transformation

To further evidence how this virtue effects a profound transformation in the human personality we will quote and comment on some passages from Ferdinand Valentine, O.P.⁴⁷. When speaking of the non-Christian, “who by the help of God’s natural concurrence has led a good moral life”, he says, “through the acquisition of moral virtue his whole body and indeed his person has become organised and self-adjusted for virtue with corresponding mental associations of every kind”⁴⁸. This helps us to see that not only the human will but all the faculties of the human soul, including concupiscence, can be modified by virtue.

When commenting on all the faculties of the human soul and the infused virtues he affirms that:

God must fortify the natural faculties of the soul so that whilst remaining the same in kind and in co-ordination they are given a surpassing excellence, and supernaturalised and perfected in quality to an almost infinite degree⁴⁹.

Later on he writes: “... the radical cure for sin is God’s grace which drives deeper into the human unconscious than many would have us believe”⁵⁰. God is indeed omnipotent, and through His grace can bring about the transformation, not only of the human will, but also of our concupiscible appetite.

⁴⁶ CESSARIO, *The Moral Virtues*, 66.

⁴⁷ F. VALENTINE, *The Apostolate of Chastity - A Treatise for Religious Sisters*, London, 1954.

⁴⁸ VALENTINE, *The Apostolate of Chastity*, 94.

⁴⁹ VALENTINE, *The Apostolate of Chastity*, 92.

⁵⁰ VALENTINE, *The Apostolate of Chastity*, 128.

The virtue of temperance should therefore be seen as the virtue which transforms some of the deepest desires of our human nature. It alters our concupiscible faculty so that:

the passion of *love* lives in perfect harmony with reason. We may continue “loving” chocolate, to continue with our delicious example, but only to the extent that it serves our human well-being as a whole;

the passion of *desire* or *concupiscence* will move towards this sensitive good, but again, only in the measure that reason desires;

the passion of *joy* or *delight* is truly tempered. Avoiding insensibility we will truly enjoy the sensitive good, but this joy will be moderate and never exaggerated.

To further emphasise the transforming nature of the virtue of temperance we will now dedicate some space to distinguishing it from continence.

III. Distinguishing Temperance and Continence⁵¹

1. Clarifying Examples

We will start this section by giving three examples, and in each case will ask whether or not the mentioned subject can be said to have the virtue of temperance:

Example A: A certain man has, over a long period of time, become accustomed to a life of promiscuity. On hearing the news that one of his friends

⁵¹ Here space does not permit us to explore and develop that continence by which one abstains from all venereal pleasure. This continence is found principally in virgins and secondarily in widows (cf. II-II, 155, a.1, c).

Nor does space allow us to expose the teaching of Pope John Paul II on the virtue of continence as presented in his catechesis of October 1984 and made available in the volume *Uomo e Donna lo créo - catechesi sull'amore umano*, Roma, ⁴1995 (cf. 478-488). It seems that the meaning which the Pope gives to the virtue of continence is richer than that which we will see in St. Thomas. In fact, by talking of continence ‘integrally understood, as the only way of liberating man from interior tensions’ (cf. 484, n.1), and which is capable of ‘directing both the bodily stimulations and the emotions in the sphere of the reciprocal influence of masculinity and femininity’ (cf. 486, n.6), one can conclude that continence, as understood by Pope John Paul II, is very similar to temperance as understood by the Angelic Doctor.

has contacted AIDS because of a similar life-style, he decides to abandon his old way of life. Often, however, he experiences strong sexual urges, but by sheer force of will he avoids returning to his old ways. However, he sums up his most basic attitude in the following words: “If I could indulge in sexual relations as I did in the past, thereby enjoying the maximum of sensual pleasure, and at the same time avoid the possibility of contacting AIDS, I would give in to my desires and go back to my old way of life. But as this is not possible, I had better stay away”. He sees nothing unreasonable about his desires except that giving in to them could lead to death. Can this man, whose abstinence from extra-marital sexual relations is total, be said to have the virtue of temperance?

Example B: Our second friend has been accustomed to drinking exaggerated quantities of alcohol over a long period of time. His doctor finally tells him that this is leading towards severe health problems, and that if he continues drinking in this manner he cannot expect to live for more than a year. As he does not desire to die he decides to stop drinking. At times, however, he experiences strong desires to drink, but by sheer force of will he avoids returning to his old habits. However, he sums up his most basic attitude in the following words: “I have been acting unreasonably, and even if there were no health problems it would be most reasonable for me to avoid drinking (or to drink more moderately). I will therefore resist my desires and drink no more”. He concludes: “Even if the doctor’s diagnosis is proven wrong, I will continue to resist my desires. I will stay away from alcohol and hope that these desires loose their strength”. Does he have the virtue of temperance?

Example C: Our third friend is a young boy who was brought up by very reasonable but somewhat regimental parents. He was regularly supplied with three very healthy meals. Both the quantity and the quality of the food were ideal for his human development. He was told that eating between meal times was to be exceptional and only for special reasons. He therefore formed very good eating habits. Does he necessarily have the virtue of temperance?

It is not difficult to see that our first friend does not have the virtue of temperance. More precisely, he does not have the species of temperance known as *chastity*: he does not have the *supernatural* virtue of chastity which accompanies sanctifying grace as his motivation for avoiding lust is purely natural⁵²; nor does he have the *acquired* virtue of chastity which comes through repeated acts of this virtue, and leads to facility in performing similar acts. It is evident that his concupiscible appetite has not under-

gone that transformation which is proper to the acquired virtue of temperance. This appetite is not conformed to reason - it is not the subject of temperance.

Our second friend, providing that he is in the state of sanctifying grace, has the supernatural virtue of temperance. Because of the presence of this infused virtue he has the power to make acts of temperance which are supernaturally meritorious. In his case we see that species of temperance which is called *sobriety*. However, he does not have the acquired virtue of sobriety in all its perfection. The transformation of the concupiscible appetite which is proper to this acquired virtue is only beginning. To the extent that this appetite is not yet conformed to reason, it is not yet the subject of temperance.

There is, undoubtedly, an acquired goodness in these two men that they would not have if they decided to give in to their desires. It is not difficult to see that both are now acting more reasonably than if they actually succumbed. Both seem to have that continence which is the quality “whereby a man resists evil desires, which in him are vehement”⁵³. The disposition of these two men is somewhat similar to the disposition of the temperate man, but there is, as we have said, a basic difference:

In this way continence has something of the nature of a virtue, in so far, to wit, as the reason stands firm in opposition to the passions, lest it be led astray by them: yet it does not attain to the perfect nature of a moral virtue, by which even the sensitive appetite is subject to reason so that vehement passions contrary to reason do not arise in the sensitive appetite⁵⁴.

⁵²To him we might apply the words of Our Lord: “But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt 5,28). As his only motivation for avoiding lust is the avoiding of natural death, he would feel free to indulge in adulterous desires, and would therefore not be in the state of sanctifying grace.

⁵³ II-II, q.155, a.1, c: “Alii vero dicunt continentiam esse per quam aliquis resistit concupiscentiis pravis, quae in eo vehementes existunt”.

⁵⁴ II-II, q.155, a.1, c: “Hoc autem modo continentia habet aliquid de ratione virtutis, in quantum scilicet ratio firmata est contra passiones, ne ab eis deducatur: non tamen attingit ad perfectam rationem virtutis moralis, secundum quam etiam appetitus sensitivus subditur rationi sic ut in eo non insurgant vehementes passiones rationi contrariae”.

Both of these men, by resisting their passions, can be said to be continent. They are therefore similar to the temperate man. However, as they are subject to vehement passions, they are unlike the temperate man.

Comparing both, we should observe that our first friend will have many problems: his reason does stand firm against his vehement lustful desires - in that giving in to these might lead to death; it could however stand even firmer - by desiring to moderate such vehement concupiscible desires. He holds out against his exaggerated passions, not because they are unreasonable, but because of their possible consequences. We could say that he has a “precarious continence”, and it seems that we can apply to him the following words of Cessario:

the exercise of despotic control by the will over unruly passions can only fail to accomplish its purpose. Indeed, such an exercise of the will too closely resembles the process of repression wherein, even though the ideational representation of some object of desire is withheld from consciousness, the object is no less an object of desire for that reason⁵⁵.

He immediately continues: “experience amply shows that when the will fails in its struggle with the passions, it tends to withdraw from the conflict”⁵⁶. The attitude of our first friend therefore will probably not be enough to maintain his “chaste conduct”. His attitude is not ordered to the transformation of his concupiscible appetite, which will always act like a “rebellious citizen”, and sooner or latter get its own way. It would seem therefore that our first friend does not have the fullness of the continence as understood by St. Thomas.

Our second friend, who has decided to stay away from drinking and desires to moderate his concupiscible appetite, will have less difficulties. He holds firm against his unreasonable passions because they are unreasonable. He is ready to modify his concupiscible appetite. With time his craving for drink will subdue, and may eventually be brought into perfect conformity with reason, thus allowing him to enjoy alcohol with due moderation. To him we can apply the words of Josef Pieper: “the effort of self-control per-

⁵⁵ CESSARIO, *The Moral Virtues*, 65.

⁵⁶ CESSARIO, *The Moral Virtues*, 65-66.

tains only to the less perfect steps of the beginner”⁵⁷. He is therefore a beginner, but it is possible, that after many years of perfect continence, he will also reach the full moral perfection of temperance. His abstinence would then be marked by “the joyous, radiant seal of ease, of effortlessness, of self-evident inclination”⁵⁸. The continence of our first friend, however, will probably never lead to temperance.

Presuming that our second friend, as opposed to our first, is in the state of grace, he can count on special divine assistance which will help keep him firm in his good resolutions, and also in the transformation of his concupiscible appetite. The gift of fear, which is especially associated with the virtue of temperance, will help in that “quick, instinctive impulse in the presence of temptation to leave the danger at once”⁵⁹. Recourse to the sacraments will also be of great support to this and all virtues. Through his prayers he will enjoy, in a special way, the help of the Church Militant and Triumphant. Our first friend, while never being abandoned by God or by Church, will not enjoy such powerful assistance.

Our third young friend, who has enjoyed a very healthy but somewhat regimental diet, if a Christian and in the state of grace, certainly has the supernatural virtue of temperance - more precisely, he has that species of temperance which is known as *abstinence*⁶⁰.

As there does exist a degree of order in his concupiscible appetite we should now ask: can he be considered as possessing the acquired virtue of abstinence? It seems not! After all, he has probably not yet seen that his way of acting is reasonable, and therefore has not yet made this mode of action his own. If he recognises his eating habits as being reasonable, and embraces them as such, he would become temperate.

⁵⁷ J. PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, New York, 1965, 163.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 163.

⁵⁹ L. M. MARTINEZ, *The Sanctifier*, Translated by Sister M. Aquinas O.S.U., Boston 1982, 133.

⁶⁰ In this context we understand the word abstinence to mean that moral virtue which inclines one to the moderate use of food as determined by right reason (and by faith in the case of supernatural abstinence) for one’s own moral good. Abstinence, as used in Canon Law, refers to the act of not eating any food for one hour before receiving the Eucharist (cf. CIC 919), and of not eating certain foods, such as meat, on penitential days (cf. CIC 1251).

While there is truth in the above reasoning, it also seems very reasonable to affirm that he has the acquired virtue of abstinence. If he accepts the decisions of his parents as being reasonable for him, he can be considered as having, in some way, the acquired virtue of temperance. We could say that he participates in, and accepts as such, the reasoning of his parents. Without any doubt he is at least very well disposed towards this virtue and to its perfect acquisition, which he will attain when he sees and embraces his acts as being reasonable in themselves, and not merely because they are determined by his parents.

With regard to continence it could be said that such a boy would not even have need of it, as it appears very unlikely that he has vehement passions that need to be restrained by his will.

2. The Subject of Continence

Let us now look to why St. Thomas says that continence has as its subject the human will. He first tells us that it cannot be in the concupiscible appetite because the possession of a given virtue⁶¹ implies that the subject of that virtue is different than it would be if it had the opposing vice. However, the concupiscible appetites of the continent man and the incontinent man are similar in that both are subjected to vehement desires. It is therefore not possible to hold that continence, which in the broad sense is a virtue, has as its subject the concupiscible appetite⁶². Here we can see how continence differs from temperance. Both in fact have the same object, referring to the concupiscible desire for those goods which are pleasurable according to the sense of touch⁶³. They differ in that temperance has as its subject the concupiscible appetite whereas continence does not.

Thomas next explains why continence does not have the reason as its subject. He says, that just as the concupiscible appetites of the continent and

⁶¹ To show in what sense continence is a virtue St. Thomas tells us: “continentia habet aliquid de ratione virtutis, in quantum scilicet ratio firmata est contra passiones, ne ab eis deducatur”, and concludes by saying: “Largius tamen accipiendo nomen virtutis pro quolibet principio laudabilium operum, possumus dicere continentiam esse virtutem” (cf. II-II, q.155, a.1, c).

⁶² Cf. II-II, q.155, a.3, c

⁶³ Cf. II-II, q.155, a.2, sc & c

the incontinent man are similar, likewise their reasons are similar. Both know how they should be acting: “both the continent man and the incontinent man have right reason”⁶⁴, the only difference being that one follows the light of reason, the other not. Reason is therefore not the subject of continence.

With regard to reason there is similitude between the temperate man and the continent man. Both clearly see what is the reasonable course of action and follow that course. However, at this point there seems to be a difference between the intemperate man and the incontinent man. The incontinent man has clarity of reason but does not follow it. The reason of the intemperate man, however, has been blinded by the disorder of his concupiscible appetite, so that he does not even see what is the most reasonable course of action to take. It is therefore more difficult for an intemperate man than for an incontinent man to return to reasonable action.

Thomas next says that the difference between the continent man and the incontinent man is in the choice they make: “the primary difference between them is to be found in their choice”⁶⁵. The continent man chooses to follow his reason which tells him not to give in to his vehement urges, whereas the incontinent man does not follow his reason and gives in. Continence must therefore be in that power of the soul whose act is to choose. This power is the *will*, so continence has the will as its subject. It is therefore different from the virtue of temperance.

3. Temperance is Superior to Continence

As continence has the will as its subject, while temperance has the concupiscible appetite as its subject, and as the will is superior to the concupiscible appetite, it might appear that continence is the superior of the two.

Thomas cannot agree with this as he says that the perfection of a virtue depends on its conformity to reason: “the good of a virtue derives its praise from that which is in accord with reason”⁶⁶. In the virtue of temperance reason is even more present than it is in the virtue of continence: temperance necessitates that both the will and the concupiscible appetite be in con-

⁶⁴ II-II, q.155, a.3, c: “tam continens quam incontinens habet rationem rectam”.

⁶⁵ II-II, q.155, a.3, c: “Prima autem differentia eorum invenitur in electione”.

⁶⁶ II-II, q.155, a.4, c: “Quia bonum virtutis laudabile est ex eo quod est secundum rationem”.

formity with reason, whereas continence implies that only the will is in harmony with reason⁶⁷. Temperance is therefore more perfect than continence.

However, when we examine the difference between incontinence and intemperance we see that intemperance is the greater evil. Malice resides principally in the will. The state of the intemperate man is the result of a will that over a long period of time, and through repeated acts, chooses to be intemperate. The result of this is that his will is now more inclined to sin⁶⁸. The incontinent man does not have the habit of sin, but sins when he experiences vehement passions. He is therefore quicker to repent than the intemperate person⁶⁹. His incontinence is seen in more isolated choices than in habitual choices. His will is not so gravely inclined towards sin. Consequently the sinfulness of intemperance is greater than the sinfulness of incontinence. Thomas even says that the intemperate man rejoices in his sin, as his sin has become connatural to him⁷⁰. The entire condition of the intemperate man is therefore worse than that of the incontinent man. His concupiscible appetite is profoundly disordered. Consequently his reason is clouded and no longer recognises which is the truly good way of acting. The final consequence is that his will is more inclined to sin than is the will of the person who is incontinent.

In his chapter on chastity, one of the subjective parts of the virtue of temperance, Josef Pieper speaks of the difference between temperance and continence, intemperance and incontinence. In this doctrine of St. Thomas he sees a reflection of the entire ethical thought of Aquinas:

⁶⁷ II-II, q.155, a.4, c: "Plus autem viget bonum rationis in eo qui est temperatus, in quo etiam ipse appetitus sensitivus est subiectus ratione et quasi a ratione edomitus, quam in eo qui est continens, in quo appetitus sensitivus vehementer resistit rationi per concupiscentias pravas".

⁶⁸ Cf. II-II, q.156, a.3, c: "In eo autem qui est intemperatus, voluntas inclinatur ad peccandum ex propria electione, quae procedit ex habitu per consuetudinem acquisito".

⁶⁹ Cf. II-II, q.156, a.3, c: "In eo autem qui est incontinens, voluntas inclinatur ad peccandum ex aliqua passione. Et quia passio cito transit, habitus autem est qualitas difficile mobilis, inde est quod incontinens statim poenitet, transeunte passione".

⁷⁰ Cf. II-II, q.156, a.3, c: "quinimmo gaudet se peccasse, eo quod operatio peccati est sibi facta connaturalis secundum habitum".

Because it *is* not always the same thing when two people *do* the same thing, a moral doctrine which regards only the actions of man but not his being, is always in danger of seeing only the sameness (or the difference) of the actions, and missing important differences (or samenesses) at a greater depth. Since, however, the moral theology of the universal teacher of the Church is a doctrine of virtue - that is, a doctrine of the *being* of man as the source of his actions - the difference between *temperantia-intemperantia* on the one hand and *continentia-incontinentia* on the other hand could not easily escape him.

Chastity as *temperantia*, or unchastity as *intemperantia*: This means that each, respectively, has become a deep-rooted basic attitude of man, and, as it were, a second nature to him. Chastity as *continentia*, or unchastity as *incontinentia*: This means that neither is necessarily based on what might be called a natural inclination of being; neither has as yet grown firm roots in the existential core of man⁷¹.

With Thomas and Pieper we can say that temperance, and all other virtues, only reach their perfection when they have become deep rooted habits. More importantly we can say that the acting person himself only arrives at his own perfection which these virtues have become deeply rooted in the respective faculties of his being. Through the acquisition of these virtues he begins to exist in a different way. And as this way of existence is more congenial, disposed to good action, his action also reaches its own perfection.

Likewise vice only reaches its lowest point when it is deep rooted. This, as we have seen, perverts the entire man. All his faculties are inclined towards sin, so that, we can unfortunately say, sin has become second nature to him.

We will close our reflections on temperance and continence by, once again, quoting what Pieper has to say on the difference between these two realities:

In Thomas's explicit opinion, the effort of self-control pertains only to the less perfect steps of the beginner, whereas real, perfected virtue, by the very nature of its concept, bears the joyous, radiant seal of ease, of effortlessness, of self-evident inclination⁷².

⁷¹ PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 163.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 163.

Temperance is therefore not only more perfect, but as it is deep-rooted it involves less strain and less danger of falling in the opposing direction. It is therefore easier for the temperate man to do good than it is for the continent man. And as the good has become second nature to him, he does it with great joy.

IV. Temperance and Human Dignity

The aim of this part of our article is twofold: firstly, to show that temperance leads to appreciating oneself and others as possessing that most basic dignity of being created in the image of God and therefore of being intelligent and free; secondly, we will see how temperance is a mainstay of all other virtues and thereby helps man achieve the perfect dignity of the sons of God. It helps man to be truly free, free from all passion and sin. We will therefore see how temperance is related to the “twofold dignity proper to human beings; one [which] is intrinsic and an endowment or gift; the other [which] is also intrinsic, but it is an achievement or acquisition”⁷³.

1. Temperance and the Appreciation of Human Dignity

In recognising the object and the subject of the virtue of temperance, and by seeing that it differs from continence, we see how it places order into the depths of the human personality. This cannot but help man to appreciate his own dignity, his being created in the image and likeness of God. Man sees that his passions, being deeply conformed to reason, are at the service of his overall well-being. He is not controlled by his passions, but these, having being transformed by temperance, are docile to the gentlest promptings of reason and will. Such a person deeply appreciates his own dignity. In very blunt terms we can say that the temperate man is deeply aware of how he differs from the animal world.

But even the continent man will have a greater appreciation of his own dignity than the incontinent man. He begins to see himself as “lord” of his passions. He is not controlled by these, but rather controls them. His appreciation of his dignity, and the resulting joy, could be compared to that of the rider who is managing to break and train a horse.

⁷³ W. E. MAY, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, Huntington, Ind., 1985, 19.

However, as the horse becomes more and more docile, and as rider and horse begin to form an harmonious team through the perfect compliance of the horse, the rider's appreciation of his own greatness, and his joy in exercising it, increases. Likewise, the person who, through the grace of God and his own efforts, has effected the compliance of his concupiscible appetite to reason, will have a deep awareness of his being made in the image and likeness of God.

When speaking of the baseness of intemperance Thomas says that it is repugnant to human excellence as it is about pleasures which men and animals have in common⁷⁴. The person who indulges in these pleasures in an instinctual way, without recognising their being at the service of the human person as a whole, acts in a way similar to the animals. In other words, one who seeks these pleasures as if they were ends in themselves has lowered himself to the level of animals who do not have spiritual souls. This shows the disgracefulness of intemperance.

It is now not difficult to see how every act of intemperance is an assault on human dignity and our appreciation of the same. By constantly living at the level of the senses, one loses awareness of one's spiritual calling, thereby losing sight of one's true goal, of one's potential beauty, of one's true dignity.

Intemperance, especially unchastity, will also lead to a decreased appreciation of the dignity of other persons. Man will look on others as mere instruments whose only finality is to provide sensual gratification. He thereby loses appreciation of their dignity. When speaking of the beneficial influence of the "man-woman relationship in society", and of any possible violation of the practise of chastity as the "fundamental condition of [such] a creative social collaboration", Ferdinand Valentine states: "Outside the creative act of marriage this surrender of woman is, of its very nature, an enslavement which sacrifices her dignity and destroys her influence"⁷⁵. This is so as such an extra-marital surrender would not be characterised by that complete "giving of self" which should include, not only the dimensions of bodily and sentimental gratification, but also the "life-giving" or "fruitful" dimension,

⁷⁴ Cf. II-II, q.142, a.4, c: "Est igitur intemperantia maxime exprobrabilis, propter duo. Primo quidem, quia maxime repugnat excellentiae hominis: est enim circa delectationes communes nobis et brutis".

⁷⁵ VALENTINE, *The Apostolate of Chastity*, 71.

as well as a truly spiritual, even supernatural, dimension. If realised in this way the sexual act becomes what it is destined to be, and therefore promotes the dignity and influence of woman. If not realised in this way, if realised in a way that denies the spiritual and the “maternal”, woman does ‘sacrifice her dignity and does lose her influence’, which is fruitful in being maternal. The dignity and freedom of woman is therefore sacrificed by unchastity. And if her freedom is sacrificed, likewise the possibility of her having a positively feminine influence on society is lost.

A particular instance of the possible degradation of woman is highlighted in *Humanae Vitae*. Pope Paul VI saw the use of contraceptives as facilitating such a degradation:

Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection⁷⁶.

This reduced appreciation that man has for woman will also contribute to her having a reduced appreciation of herself. If she is constantly treated as an instrument, she will inevitably have great difficulty in not seeing herself as such. Intemperance therefore introduces a vicious cycle of attacks to the dignity of the female person.

We could now look more closely to the spiritual nature of man. The classical definition of man tells us that he is a “rational animal”⁷⁷. In this definition we see that what is specific to man is his rational or spiritual nature. His specific and most elevated kind of action should therefore be spiritual. Man reaches his highest form of action when he uses his highest faculty to understand the highest truth, which is God. The person who does not appreciate this doctrine does not appreciate himself as being created “in the image and likeness of God”. He does not see himself as an intelligent being who is capable of knowing moral truth and of knowing his own highest good - God. There is no doubt but that intemperance - understood as an unreasonable desire for goods of the sense - destroys one’s appreciation of goods of the spirit. The person who constantly gives himself to sensual pleasure loses

⁷⁶ PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, n.17.

⁷⁷ We choose to stay with this definition as to describe man as “a rational being” is to leave him undistinguished from the angels.

sight of himself as one who is destined to know and freely unite himself to God. In other words: he loses appreciation of the dignity with which he was born. The baseness of his vice hides from him the heights to which he is called.

Temperance, by which man brings the order of reason to the sphere of the human passions, will confirm man in appreciating himself as being made in the image and likeness of God. He will recognise the greatness of his nature and the greatness of the end to which he is called. He will appreciate that the goal of his life is to become ever more like God. This he does by living a life which is truly reasonable, a life in harmony with all reality, the reality of creation and the reality of divine grace received through faith. The temperate man has therefore a greater appreciation of his own dignity and the dignity of other persons.

2. The Virtue of Temperance as Foundation of the Cardinal Virtues

In the second reason which St. Thomas gives for intemperance's being the most disgraceful of vices he points to the heights from which it takes us:

Secondly, because it is most repugnant to man's clarity or beauty; inasmuch as the pleasures which are the matter of intemperance dim the light of reason from which all the clarity and beauty of virtue arise; wherefore these pleasures are described as being most slavish⁷⁸.

Here we see that without the light of reason there is no virtue, and that intemperance is a principal destroyer of such light. Earlier we saw that spiritual beauty consists in man's conduct or actions being in proportion to the light of reason⁷⁹. But as such proportion or harmony between clarity of reason and human action is the essence of the life of the cardinal virtues, we see that intemperance is a chief destroyer of these four virtues considered as a whole, and therefore of the human dignity which we acquire through a virtuous life. Intemperance by dimming the light of reason weakens all virtue and thereby erodes human dignity.

⁷⁸ II-II, q.142, a.4, c: "Secundo, quia maxime repugnat eius claritati vel pulchritudini: in quantum scilicet in delectationibus circa quas est intemperantia, minus apparet de lumine rationis, ex qua est tota claritas et pulchritudo. Unde et huiusmodi delectationes dicuntur maxime serviles".

⁷⁹ Cf. II-II, q.145, a.2, c.

By studying an article of the *Summa* which deals with the hierarchy of the four cardinal virtues we will begin to see how temperance disposes us to practice the remaining three virtues:

Now reason's good is man's good, ... prudence, since it is a perfection of reason, has the good essentially: while justice effects this good, since it belongs to justice to establish the order of reason in all human affairs: whereas the other virtues safeguard this good, inasmuch as they moderate the passions, lest they lead man away from reason's good. As to the order of the latter, fortitude holds the first place, because fear of dangers of death has the greatest power to make man recede from the good of reason: and after fortitude comes temperance, since also pleasures of touch excel all others in hindering the good of reason⁸⁰.

Man's perfection pertains to that faculty which is specific to him as man. This faculty is reason, so it is through the virtue of prudence that man possesses his essential human perfection. Justice, however, is the virtue that realises *in fact* the good that is recognised and decided on by prudence. It is therefore the second highest cardinal virtue. The third highest virtue is fortitude. By it man not only overcomes the fear of death, which is most efficacious in diverting him from performing the just act, but also overcomes all other fears which could hinder his realising of such acts.

Temperance occupies the last place in this hierarchy. It has the task of moderating the passions when these act as impediments to the performance of the good act. An example of this would be the temperate man's ease in giving to each of his employees a just wage even though by doing so he will no longer have the money which he could have spent of some sensual pleasure. The intemperate man, on the other hand, is so occupied with satisfying his own unreasonable desires that he does not give sufficient consideration to the just demands of others. The temperate person, not having such desires, is free to recognise and perform the just act. Temperance therefore plays the role of conserving morally good acts. It facilitates or clears the way for the practice of just action.

⁸⁰ II-II, q. 123, a. 12, c: "Bonum autem rationis est hominis bonum, ... Hoc autem bonum essentialiter quidem habet prudentia, quae est perfectio rationis. Iustitia autem est huius boni factiva: in quantum scilicet ad ipsam pertinet ordinem rationis ponere in omnibus rebus humanis. Aliae autem virtutes sunt conservativae huius boni: in quantum scilicet moderantur passiones, ne abducant hominem a bono rationis. Et in ordine harum fortitudo tenet locum praecipuum: quia timor periculorum mortis maxime est efficax ad hoc quod hominem faciat recedere a bono rationis. Postquam ordinantur temperantia: quia etiam delectationes tactus maxime inter cetera impediunt bonum rationis".

The relationship between the virtues of temperance and fortitude is captured by Brazilian medical doctor, priest and theologian, Fr. João Mohana. Speaking of the pastoral experience of Max Sangnier, who promoted a truly virile chastity among a group of French youths, he says:

The experience of these youths was admirable. How it enriched them for life! How it armed them, how it shielded them, how it equipped them to be victorious in all sectors! It is so as sexual control exercises the will of the individual, and all know how a strong will brightens a personality. The youth who has overcome the difficulty of sexuality through chastity considers himself as being ready to overcome all future problems. ... Trained through chastity, he has become familiar with heroism, and he who is familiar with heroism is *ipso facto* trained for all difficulties, for all battles. He will have no tendency to despair, nor to flight⁸¹.

The expressions of Mohana, such as “sexual control exercises the will”, “a strong will brightens a personality”, and “overcome the difficulty of sexuality”, seem to point more to the first acts of the beginner in matters of chastity, i.e., to acts of continence whereby the will stands firm against vehement passions. In this we see how even acts of the imperfect virtue of continence train the person “for all difficulties, for all battles”, and thereby prepare him for the virtue of courage. If this is true, how much more will those youths, who pass from continence to the integrity of temperance, face difficulty in order to reach great goals. For them fortitude will come with even greater ease. Temperance frees them so that they cling more clearly to the light of reason, and are more willing to suffer for it. Having transformed that power of the soul which tends towards pleasures of the sense, they will have little difficulty in facing the sensitive evil which is often placed between them and the difficult or arduous good.

The connection between these two virtues is also highlighted by Josef Piper: “Temperance, as the wellspring and premise of fortitude, is the virtue

⁸¹ J. MOHANA, *A vida sexual dos solteiros e casados*, Edições Loyola (São Paulo 1994), 58: “A experiência desses moços foi admirável. Como os enriqueceu para a vida! Como os armou, como os escudou, como os aparelhou para vencerem em todos os setores! Porque o controle sexual exercita a vontade do indivíduo, e todo mundo sabe que uma vontade robusta dá brilho à personalidade. O rapaz que superou o problema sexual pela castidade acha-se treinado para superar os problemas do futuro. ... Adestrado pela castidade, ele se familiarizou com o heroísmo, e quem se familiarizou com o heroísmo *ipso facto* está adestrado para todos os arrancos, para todas as lutas. Não terá tendência ao desânimo, à fuga”. Translation from Portuguese to English by author of article.

of mature manliness”⁸². Seeing intemperance to be a childish vice, we see clearly how temperance is a truly virile virtue. By placing order in man’s most basic impulses, it frees him from exaggerated attachment to the sensitive good. This in turn will ensure that there is not an exaggerated aversion to the sensitive evil. He will therefore be more ready to face great evil so that the good act recognised by reason will be performed.

With a certain fear of overemphasising the obvious we will quote another but very significant passage of Pieper’s:

By preserving and defending order in man himself, *temperantia* creates the indispensable prerequisite for both the realisation of actual good and the actual movement of man towards his goal. Without it, the stream of the innermost human will-to-be would overflow destructively beyond all bounds, it would lose its direction and never reach the sea of perfection. Yet *temperantia* is not itself the stream. But it is the shore, the banks, from whose solidity the stream receives the gift of straight unhindered course, of force, descent and velocity⁸³.

Temperance therefore does not realise the good. It rather frees man from those attachments which would act as impediments to his realising the good through the virtue of justice. The attention of the intemperate man is constantly turned towards satisfying his own superfluous concupiscible desires. We could say that his energies are wasted on satisfying these desires rather than being channelled towards the truly reasonable good which alone corresponds to human dignity. These goods were meant to serve man’s overall well-being. Instead of doing so they become an end in themselves, and man’s true good is neglected. The intemperate man’s desires represent a certain “overflow” which go “destructively beyond all bounds”. He thereby loses his ‘direction and never reaches the sea of perfection’. Temperance acts like the banks of a river which keep desires within reasonable limits, and thereby facilitates those acts which are in harmony with man’s true end. Through the performance of such acts man acquires that dignity which lies in the observance of God’s law⁸⁴.

We will now look more specifically to how temperance disposes for prudence. We will see this principally by examining how its contrary, intemper-

⁸² PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 203.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 175.

ance, is the enemy of this virtue. In the *Summa* we read: “intemperance is the chief corruptive of prudence: wherefore the vices opposed to prudence arise chiefly from lust, which is the principal species of intemperance”⁸⁵. Pieper, in what seems to be a commentary on the above passage, tells us that:

Unchastity most effectively falsifies and corrupts the virtue of prudence. All that conflicts with the virtue of prudence stems for the most part from unchastity; unchastity begets a blindness of spirit which practically excludes all understanding of the goods of the spirit⁸⁶.

The unchaste person is so concentrated on satisfying the inclinations of the flesh that he is not open to understanding the reasonable good. It is not merely that unchastity in some way hinders the perception of such goods, it actually makes the person incapable of seeing them as good for himself, and substitutes them with the false goods of the flesh.

Pieper goes into detail with regard to the effect of intemperance on prudence. He speaks of how it is a negative influence at each of the three steps involved in making a prudent decision. The three steps of this process are deliberation, judgement and decision itself.

The sensual preoccupations of the man who lacks temperance will mean that, for him, “deliberation guided by the truth of things” will be substituted by “recklessness and inconsideration”⁸⁷. Intemperance therefore leads to an impulsiveness which does not take counsel. Temperance, on the other hand, by rendering the soul tranquil disposes one for this most basic act of prudence.

After having taken counsel it is necessary to judge what is the most reasonable way of acting. The impetuosity of the person, who has never learned

⁸⁴ Cf. GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

⁸⁵ II-II, q.153. a.5, ad. 1: “... intemperantia maxime corrumpit prudentiam. Et ideo vitia opposita prudentiae maxime oriuntur ex luxuria, quae est praecipua intemperantiae species”.

⁸⁶ PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 159-160.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 162.

to control his most basic impulses, will lead to “a hasty judgement which will not wait until reason has weighed the pros and cons”⁸⁸. The virtue of temperance is not only necessary in order to take counsel, but, after having seen all the possible ways of acting, it is necessary to look to the advantages and disadvantages of each possibility in order to make the correct judgement with regard to which mode of action is morally best.

But even if after a hasty judgement, perchance, a correct decision were reached, such a decision “would always be endangered by the fickleness of a heart that abandons itself indiscriminately to the surging mass of sensual impressions”⁸⁹. When speaking of “the reason’s command about the thing to be done”, which is reason’s final act in the process of a prudent decision, Thomas says, “this also is impeded by lust, in so far as through being carried away by concupiscence, a man is hindered from doing what his reason ordered to be done”⁹⁰, evidently because it will call for sacrificing sensual goods for higher goods. With the help of Thomas and Pieper we clearly see that intemperance leads to inconstancy and in this sense is also at enmity with prudent action.

Intemperance therefore renders one incapable of acting prudently. Temperance, on the contrary, will provide the ideal conditions: for tranquil and lucid deliberation; for judgement which takes account of all factors involved; and for a firm decision that bears fruit in morally good action.

By looking to the vice of gluttony we will see further evidence that intemperance leads to imprudence. St. Thomas tells us that one of the five “daughters” of gluttony is loquacity. He places it as the third disorder of the soul that results from over eating and over drinking⁹¹. It is however well known to us that loquacious persons have great difficulty in practising the silence which is necessary for listening. It is therefore evident that people who lack the virtue of temperance will not have the ability to listen to the *voice of reality*. This leads Pieper to say:

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 162.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, 162.

⁹⁰ II-II, q.153, a.5, c: “Quod etiam impeditur per luxuriam: in quantum scilicet homo impeditur ex impetu concupiscentiae ne exequatur id quod decrevit esse faciendum”.

⁹¹ II-II, q.148, a.6, c: “Tertio, quantum ad inordinatum verbum. Et sic ponitur multiloquium: quia, ut Gregorius dicit, ... nisi gulae deditos immoderata loquacitas raperet, dives ille qui epulatus quotidie splendide dicitur, in lingua gravius non arderet”.

Unchaste abandon and the self-surrender of the soul to the world of sensuality paralyzes the primordial powers of the moral person: the ability to perceive, in silence, the call of reality, and to make, in the retreat of this silence, the decision appropriate to the concrete situation of concrete action⁹².

Intemperance therefore by leading to an inability to listen, closes one off from many areas of reality. This implies an incapacity to take adequate counsel and to truly judge as to which of the available possibilities is objectively most reasonable. Intemperance, through lack of silence, further implies that one does not have that *retreat*, those quiet conditions, which are necessary for making prudent decisions.

Intemperance therefore leads to injustice, cowardice and imprudence. It prevents us from reaching that dignity which “we are to give to ourselves (with the help of God’s unfailing grace) by freely choosing to shape our lives and actions in accord with the truth”⁹³. Temperance, the most basic of virtues, prepares the person for prudence, justice and fortitude. This once again shows us how this virtue can be classified as the most basic friend of the human dignity achieved through a life of virtuous action.

3. Temperance and the Intellectual Virtues

From what we have already said it is not difficult to see that the virtue of temperance will also have positive effects for our intellectual life. If it leads to the perfection of the practical reason, it will also pay rich dividends for the reason *as* speculative. In fact, it seems, that in a certain sense, this speculative perfection even precedes the perfection of the practical reason. In the article quoted above, in which Thomas spoke of the steps involved in the prudence decision, he mentions *simple understanding* as being even more basic than the three which we have already studied:

Now the reason has four acts in matters of action. First there is simple understanding, which apprehends some end as good, and this act is hindered by lust, according to Dan 13, 56, *Beauty hath deceived thee, and lust hath perverted thy heart*. In this respect we have blindness of spirit⁹⁴.

⁹² PIEPER, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, 160.

⁹³ MAY, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 20.

⁹⁴ II-II, q.153, a.5, c: “Sunt autem rationis quatuor actus in agendis. Primo quidem, simplex intelligentia, quae apprehendit aliquem finem ut bonum. Et hic actus impeditur per luxuriam; secundum illud Dan 13,56: Species decepit te, et concupiscentia subvertit cor tuum. Et quantum ad hoc ponitur caecitas mentis”.

The intemperate person therefore will even suffer from an incapacity of recognising what is morally good in itself. He will not have that facility in comprehending moral principles that the temperate man enjoys. We can well imagine, for example, that a man totally bent on sexual gratification, would even become blind to the principle that the marriage act is naturally ordered to procreation. Thomas explains why this happens: “When the lower powers are strongly moved towards their objects, the result is that the higher powers are hindered and disordered in their acts”⁹⁵. The vehemence with which the concupiscible appetite tends towards its object impedes the reason from performing its own proper activity. This not only hinders the process of making a prudent decision but it also prevents one from comprehending those principles which are prerequisites to this process of prudence.

In his book, *The Silence of Saint Thomas*, Pieper gives us what we could call a commentary on the article quoted above, in which Thomas tells us that unchastity’s first-born daughter in blindness of spirit:

Since we nowadays think that all a man needs for acquisition of truth is to exert his brain more or less vigorously, and since we consider an ascetic approach to knowledge hardly sensible, we have lost the awareness of the close bond that links the knowledge of truth to the condition of purity. Thomas says that unchastity’s first-born daughter is blindness of the spirit. Only he who wants nothing for himself, who is not subjectively “interested,” can know the truth. On the other hand, an impure, selfishly corrupted will-to-pleasure destroys both resoluteness of spirit and the ability of the psyche to listen in silent attention to the language of reality⁹⁶.

Here we see, that what St. Thomas applied to the understanding of moral principles, Pieper applies to the intellectual life in general. Temperance therefore is indispensable for growth in the virtues of understanding, science and wisdom. This virtue disposes us for such growth, firstly by freeing the souls natural love and desire for truth, secondly by giving the resolution of spirit needed for the academic life, and thirdly by creating the disposition of listening which is necessary if man is to conform his mind to reality through

⁹⁵ II-II, q.153, a.5, c: “quando inferiores potentiae vehementer afficiuntur ad sua obiecta, consequens est quod superiores vires impediuntur et deordinantur in suis actibus”.

⁹⁶ J. PIEPER, *The Silence of St. Thomas. Three Essays*, trans. by John Murray and Daniel O’ Connor, Chicago 1965, 19-20.

these three intellectual virtues.

We have already seen that the intemperate man has difficulty in simply appreciating himself and others as being created in the image and likeness of God - as being created with a spiritual vocation. We now see how intemperance diminishes or destroys our ability to realise our vocation through knowledge and contemplation of truth.

4. Temperance and the Theological Virtues

We have already seen clearly how intemperance is a hindrance to the life of the intellect. The life of the intellect, however, reaches its peak in the virtue of faith. This virtue has as its formal object God as the first truth, God who in revealing can neither be deceived nor deceive. It has as its material object God and created reality inasmuch as it is ordered to God⁹⁷. The subject of this virtue is the intellect⁹⁸. All that hinders the life of the intellect therefore will also be a hindrance to the virtue of faith, and all that promotes the life of the intellect will be a help to faith. Temperance, consequently, must be classified as a virtue which disposes us for belief in revealed truth.

St. Thomas has more direct references with regard to how intemperance, especially unchastity, is opposed to the virtues of hope and charity. When speaking of how this vice has negative consequences for the will he says:

On the part of the will there results a two-fold inordinate act. One is the desire for the end, to which we refer *self-love*, which regards the pleasure which a man desires inordinately, while on the other hand there is *hatred of God*, by reason of His forbidding the desired pleasure⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ Cf. II-II, q.1, a.1, c: "Sic igitur in fide, si consideremus formalem rationem obiecti, nihil est aliud quam veritas prima: non enim fides de qua loquimur assentit alicui nisi quia est a Deo revelatum; unde ipsi veritati divinae innititur tanquam medio. Si vero consideremus materialiter ea quibus fides assentit, non solum est ipse Deus, sed etiam multa alia. Quae tamen sub assensu fidei non cadunt nisi secundum quod habent aliquem ordinem ad Deum ... "

⁹⁸ Cf. II-II, q.4, a.2, c: "Credere autem est immediate actus intellectus: quia obiectum huius actus est verum, quod proprie pertinet ad intellectum. Et ideo necesse est quod fides, quae est proprium principium huius actus, sit in intellectu sicut in subiecto".

⁹⁹ II-II, q.153, a.5, c: "Ex parte autem voluntatis, consequitur duplex actus inordinatus. Quorum unus est appetitus finis. Et quantum ad hoc, ponitur amor sui, quantum scilicet ad delectationem quam inordinate appetit: et per oppositum ponitur odium Dei, in quantum scilicet prohibet delectationem concupitam".

It is not difficult for us to understand how one, who has an exaggerated love for sensual goods, will not only have little inclination to love God, who is the supreme spiritual good, but will also develop a hatred for God. On hearing of God's commandments, which prohibit his unchaste actions, he will not only despise these commandments, but will begin to hate the one who gave them. For Christians this will involve sinning against charity. Intemperance therefore by allowing the most basic tendencies of human nature to dominate, leads to sin against the most sublime of all human and Christian tendencies, the tendency to be united to God in charity. Temperance not only frees us to love God, but it encourages us to love Him all the more for having given us precepts which confirm the order of reason, and guidelines for fulfilling this order.

Having seen how intemperance is an enmity with charity, it should not be difficult to see how it is also at enmity with married love. Charity is friendship with God and love of neighbour for God's sake. But between human persons marriage is the most perfect friendship, and the conjugal act is the most perfect and complete expression of this friendship. Spouses who are free from egoism through the virtue of chastity, will perform this act in a way that expresses not only mutual respect but also the integrity of "personal donation". This act will therefore be performed in a way that is truly loving. In the measure that spouses have chastity, they will perform the conjugal act with greater charity, and will proportionally grow in sanctifying grace and charity towards God and each other¹⁰⁰.

¹⁰⁰ It seems that there exist two basic ways in which the couple can practise chastity with regard to the marriage act. The first is taken from the Book of Tobias, the second from Pauline theology:

Here we read of the one or three nights (cf. Tobit 6,18 and 8,4-9 of Vulgata & Neo-Vulgata) of abstinence observed by the newly weds, Tobias and Sarah. The finality being to avoid any lustful motivation, and to unite themselves in truth before God: "Et nunc non luxuriae causa accipio hanc sororem meam, sed in veritatae".

In I Cor 7,5-7 we see how St. Paul recommends certain periods of abstinence, agreed on mutually, so that the couple can dedicate themselves to prayer, which would undoubtedly lead to an increase in married love.

In third place we could mention the reasonable use of Natural Family Planning. When there exist just causes [justae causae] the couple may, with peaceful consciences, "take advantage of the natural cycles immanent in the reproductive system and use their marriage at precisely those times that are infertile" (PAUL VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 16b). This would furnish the couple with an opportunity to practise a form of periodic continence which increases both mutual respect and love. Such continence will undoubtedly help the virtue of chastity find deeper and more joyful roots in the souls of the married couple.

Disordered concupiscence not only involves an exaggerated desire for sensual goods, but it also comports an exaggerated desire to stay in this world, as this is the only means by which one can enjoy such goods. This obviously signifies that one will not hope for the future world which is the only way of reaching union with God. Thomas when speaking of this says:

The other act is the desire for the things directed to the end. With regard to this there is *love of this world*, whose pleasure a man desires to enjoy, while on the other hand there is *despair of a future world*, because through being held back by carnal pleasures he cares not to obtain spiritual pleasures, since they are distasteful to him¹⁰¹.

The intemperate man therefore will not desire the eternal life through which man's ultimate end of union with God is achieved. We could say that his desire for sensible goods has suffocated his desire for eternal goods. And not having a longing for such goods he will not occupy himself with spiritual affairs. He will rather find all such matters repugnant as they oppose the most basic tendencies of his personality. Temperance, on the other hand, ordering all sensual goods to the true well-being of man, disposes him to desire his greatest good and all the means through which this is achieved. He is therefore open to confidently desiring entrance into the future life, as this is how he will achieve the perfection of charity, which is the end for which he was created.

Conclusion

Human dignity, we saw, to have four constitutive elements: three of these are given as gifts from the Creator - the dignity of being intelligent and free persons, the dignity of the being called to communion with God, and the dignity of being incorporated into Christ by grace; the fourth is achieved through a life of moral action - it is the dignity that lies in observing God's law¹⁰², the law "which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbour"¹⁰³.

¹⁰¹ II-II, q.153, a.5, c: "Alius autem est appetitus eorum quae sunt ad finem. Et quantum ad hoc, ponitur affectus praesentis saeculi, in quo scilicet aliquis vult frui voluptate: et per oppositum ponitur desperatio futuri saeculi, quia dum nimis detinetur carnalibus delectationibus, non curat pervenire ad spirituales, sed fastidit eas".

¹⁰² Cf. GS 16 (Flannery, 916).

¹⁰³ Cf. GS 16 (Flannery, 917).

The life of moral action thus reaches its peak in the exercise of charity. Our dignity therefore comes to its culminating point when man makes of himself a gift, a gift at the service of God and of neighbour for God's sake. This finds its most eloquent expression in the words of *Gaudium et Spes*: "man can discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself"¹⁰⁴. Yes, it is precisely in "becoming a gift" that man achieves the dignity, the spiritual beauty, which is gained by "freely choosing to shape our lives and actions in accord with the truth"¹⁰⁵. All that constitutes our most basic dignity is gift from God. What constitutes our greatest dignity is becoming a gift to God.

But to give ourselves as a gift, we must first possess ourselves, so as to be free for this giving. This self-possession is principally achieved, as we have seen throughout the course of this article, by the virtue of temperance. It is this virtue that puts the order of reason into the depths of the human personality, thus transforming our most basic passions and appetites¹⁰⁶. The temperate person is therefore capable of "becoming a gift". This truth is captured in the following words: "Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self"¹⁰⁷. And as our human dignity reaches its climax in our "being a gift" to God and our neighbour, we can close by once again affirming that the virtue of temperance is the most basic friend of this dignity.

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¹⁰⁴ GS 24 (Flannery, 925).

¹⁰⁵ MAY, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. CCC, n.2341, 501.

¹⁰⁷ CCC, n.2346, 502.