

Ordinatio III, d. 34, q. un., “Are the virtues, fruits, beatitudes, and gifts the same habits?”

I. Reply to the Question
A. Henry of Ghent’s View
1. Exposition of the view

6 In reply to this question Henry says in *Quodlibet* IV, q. 23, that there are three ways in which someone can be disposed with respect to intense pleasures: in a human way, in a superhuman way, and in a nonhuman way. Likewise, there are three ways in which someone can be disposed with respect to inordinate sorrows (*tristitias*):

7 The first is in a human way, when someone faces frightening things with the requisite circumstances. This is the function of moral virtue, whether acquired or infused, though moral virtue does not cause someone to face frightening things without some sorrow, according to Aristotle in *Ethics* III.10 [1115b10–13] and Augustine in *De Trinitate* XIII.7.10.

8 The second is in a superhuman way, when someone faces something frightening with joy, as was the case with some of the martyrs.

9 The third is in a nonhuman way, a quasi-divine way, not only facing death with joy but actually desiring it with joy, as Paul longed “to be dissolved and to be with Christ” [Philippians 1:23]. This is proved by what Augustine says in his first homily on John, where he is expounding this passage from 1 Corinthians [3:4]: “When there is division among you, are you not merely human?” Augustine writes, “He wanted them to be gods, as is said in the Psalms: ‘I have said, you are gods.’”¹

10 In this third way there is the heroic virtue that the Philosopher conjectures is opposed to beastliness, which is a nonhuman disposition toward vicious pleasures. See *Ethics* VII.1 [1145a22–23].

11 The claim, then, is that the virtues perfect human beings in a human way, the gifts in a superhuman way, and the beatitudes in a nonhuman way.

2. Refutation of the view

12 But there many objections to this.

First, charity is the most excellent of God’s gifts, according to Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.19.37; and what is more, according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13:2–3, “If I have courage and deliver my body to be burned” —this seems to be in the nonhuman way, because he desires to burn for God’s sake—“but do not have charity, I

¹In. Ioan. *Evangelium* tr. 1 n. 4, quoting Psalm 81:6.

gain nothing.” Evidently, then, no gift perfects someone in a more excellent way than charity does; and yet charity is a virtue, and [perfects someone] in the first degree,² if we are talking about the moral and theological virtues.

13 Moreover, through the habit of courage a human will can rightly maintain the mean concerning frightening things; therefore, if it can do this, it can do so more rightly and most rightly, as much as is possible for such a nature. Therefore, either it can tend [toward the mean] through the same habit of courage in the same species, with different degrees that do not change the species—in which case specifically the same habit disposes someone to face something frightening in the supreme, perfect way as disposes him also in the smallest way—or else, if it is not the same habit, but a different one, then the habit that disposes someone to face something frightening in the smallest way is of necessity imperfect in terms of both its act and its object, because it cannot have perfection with respect to facing what is frightening. But then it would follow that in order for someone to be disposed perfectly with respect to frightening things, he would have to have a habit of a different species. And a plurality of species should evidently not be posited without manifest necessity, that is, unless one species would not be sufficient—which does not appear to be the case here.

14 Moreover, Christ was sorrowful in his suffering, as I said in Book III, d. 15 [n. 65], as were all martyrs left to themselves (that is, if no miracle was done for them); even though they faced death voluntarily, they did not do so without some sorrow, as is clear from what Augustine says in *De Trinitate* XIII.7.10, where he argues against the philosophers who said that they were happy because they had whatever they wanted, because if favorable things happened to them, they willed those things; and if unfavorable things happened, they willed those also, in that they bore up under them patiently. He argues against them that in unfavorable circumstances they did not in fact have what they willed, because as far as it was up to them, they willed that those things not happen; but if they did happen, they willed to bear up under them patiently lest they be even more unhappy because they failed to maintain their patient endurance. A plausible argument for this view is that there cannot be patience with respect to something that is desirable in its own right. Therefore, martyrs facing misfortunes in this life had something that they did not in every respect will, because the object of their patient endurance was not desirable and willable in its absolute nature; instead, they faced it patiently for God’s sake.

15 Furthermore, it is impossible for one and the same person to perform a given act humanly, superhumanly, and nonhumanly at the same time. So when a gift is acquired, the virtue that had been previously acquired, or infused in baptism, will be destroyed;

²That is, in a human way.

or if it remains, it will not be possible for it to issue in its characteristic act, or else it will not be necessary, because the agent will be able to perform its act in virtue of the more perfect gift. In the same way, the beatitudes will destroy the necessity of both the virtues and the gifts, which seems untenable, particularly if we are talking about the theological virtues, because charity is not destroyed in heaven, and faith and hope are not destroyed in this life.

16 Furthermore, the words ‘superhumanly’ and ‘nonhumanly’ are metaphorical, since any action on the part of a human being is, properly speaking, human. After all, just as a right action must be suitable in its object, end, and other circumstances, so too it must be suitable to the person performing it—it is not suitable for me to do what is suitable for the king, much less what is suitable for an angel. Therefore, for an act of a human being to be right, he must do it in a human way. Therefore, any habit that disposes a human being to do something unqualifiedly in a human way disposes him absolutely to acting with respect to that thing.

17 Furthermore, suppose someone were always praying, and he was given the gift of understanding and did not exercise that gift concerning matters of belief. He would not be acting in a human way concerning matters of belief, because he would not possess acquired faith, without which infused faith does not issue in act. But on your view he could act in a superhuman way, because he would have the gift. It follows that he would be able to act more excellently concerning matters of belief than someone else who had made a careful study of Holy Scripture. That is not what we find in practice. Instead, any such person would perhaps fall into error concerning matters of belief more easily than another person who was well-versed in Scripture.

18 Moreover, there are exactly as many domains in which one can be ordered or act well in a human way as there are in which one can act well in a superhuman way and in a nonhuman way; therefore, there is the same number [of habits] in each case.³

19 Furthermore, true happiness (*beatitudo*) would consist in the acts of some beatitude as supreme habit [but in fact the supreme habit is charity, which is a virtue].

B. Bonaventure’s view

20 Another view⁴ is that through the virtues one acts rightly, through the gifts perfectly, through the beatitudes readily.

³That is, there would be the same of number of virtues, gifts, and beatitudes, which is not the case.

⁴Bonaventure, *Sent.* III d. 34 pars 1 a. 1 q. 1 in corp.

21 Against this: by one and the same virtue I act rightly, because a virtue is the rectitude of a power, and readily, because a virtue is a habit that makes one act readily and easily, and perfectly, because a virtue is a perfection of the one who possesses it and by which the person's act is rendered perfect, according to *Ethics* II.5 [1106a15–17].

C. Aquinas's view

22 Another view⁵ is that there needs to be something to dispose the will as it is movable by right reason, which is virtue, and also something to dispose the will as it is movable by the Holy Spirit, which is a gift; these are, according to him, the two movers of the will.

23 Against this: the assumption that reason moves the will in such a way that a virtue is merely a movable disposition in the will is false. This view also does not account for the distinction of the beatitudes from the gifts and virtues. And third, from the time that God has given a habit to the will, he always assists both the will and the habit in the acts that are suitable to them (for example, after he miraculously gave sight to a blind man, he always assisted the sighted man so that he could be moved by that power). Therefore, it is through one and the same thing that something is made proportionate to both the second and the first mover; therefore, if a power is made proportionate to itself through a habit, it is made sufficiently proportionate to the Holy Spirit as another mover through that same habit. So this argument does not provide a basis for positing additional habits in the will.

84 As for the Philosopher's remarks about heroic virtue [n. 10], quoted in support of the first view, I say that for each virtue he assigns four degrees that belong to specifically the same habits: perseverance, continence, temperance, and heroic virtue. So the most perfect degree—but remaining in the same species—is heroic virtue; and this perfects someone in a nonhuman way, as some people say metaphorically, because it is unusual for human beings to reach that level of the same species of virtue.

85 As for the further point about its opposite, beastliness, it could likewise be said that beastliness is an excess in the same species of vice. But it would be better to say that it belongs to another species because it has a different object. But this does not prove the point under dispute, because one can go wrong and act viciously concerning many things, but one can act rightly only concerning one thing, characterized by the perfect

⁵Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I-II q. 68 a. 1 in corp.

circumstances.⁶

86 So even if beastliness is a habit distinct from ordinary human vice, because it concerns a different object, it does not follow that heroic virtue is of a different species from human virtue, because heroic virtue orders someone with respect to the same object, just more excellently, and it is not evident that this excellence cannot exist through a further degree of the same species.

⁶Cf. *Ordinatio* I d. 48 nn. 3–5; II d. 40 nn. 8–11.