

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

NATURE AND GRACE: CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF CIVIC VIRTUES

BY

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL, 1992

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ISBN 0-315-75251-3

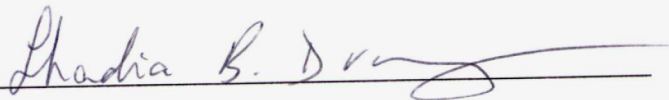
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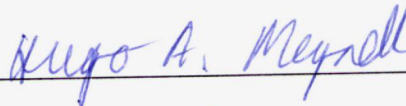
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NATURE AND GRACE: CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF CIVIC VIRTUES

ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine three Medieval Christian views on the civic virtues. In particular, this thesis will seek to determine how Christian political philosophy perceived the nature of the civic virtues in light of a belief in a corruption of human nature. The original sources which will be used are the writings of St. Augustine, Peter Abelard and St. Thomas Aquinas. The following expositions will be structured around their reflections on the possibility of a existential harmony between the ends of nature and grace, that is, between a philosophical and a salvational ethics. As will be shown, if nature is interpreted as possessing a rectitude in relation to its own sphere of concern, the civic virtues will be presented as a form of ethical life open to Christians and pagans to share in. The content of this thesis can be seen as being divided between Augustinian and Aristotelian positions. For Augustine, the civic virtues of the pagan world were problematic, for human nature has been unable to move towards any true good since the Fall unless aided by grace. Opposing this view of man is one which stresses the rational rectitude we can obtain by our own efforts. The philosophy of Abelard and Aquinas mark the gradual unfolding of the political ramifications of a perceived harmony between the virtues and ends of the pagan citizen and the theological virtues of the Christian.

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INTRODUCTION

Tertullian is famous for remarking "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians." ¹ These rather dogmatic questions have been quoted because they metaphorically encapsulate the major problem this thesis seeks to answer: How do the virtues of the natural man--in particular the civic virtues of the pagan--fare when judged according to the lofty heights of revelation? This thesis will examine the relationship between the natural virtues and those virtues pertaining to God introduced by Christianity: faith, hope and charity. The centre of this examination is the tension between nature and grace, or more precisely, between the philosophical ethics of the pagans which equated the cardinal virtues with our quest for happiness and rectitude and the salvational ethics of the Christians which questioned the ability of the natural virtues to fulfil this promise of Classical moral philosophy.

It has been suggested that Medieval thinkers were in a position to perceive a problem with the civic virtues, and

¹ See Tertullian, "On Prescription against Heretics", The Writings of Tertullian, Vol. II (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, MDCCCLXXXIV), Chapter VII. See also Etienne Gilson's Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages (New York: Scribner, 1940), pp.9-11. See also Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?", What is Political Philosophy (Westpoint, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973) for a discussion on the political context of this debate.

that cognizance of this problem was beyond the moral horizon of the pagans. Now, for the writers of the Middle Ages, citizenship was never a real problem. Christ's own teaching had separated the things of "Caesar" from those of the Church by precept. The problem which occupied their minds concerned the very essence of the natural virtues as they were seen in the light of the psychological effects of original sin upon our quest for true happiness. In other words, the major political problem for the Medievals was the relationship between (human) nature and grace. This problem--the problem of this thesis--can be divided into two parts. Firstly, Christianity continued the Classical tradition of linking virtue with our quest for happiness, or eudaemonistic ethics. It would be better to say that Christianity modified the pagan tradition because it possessed a salvational ethics--or it claimed that man's final end lies beyond the political community, or the natural order in general. Virtue thus points to eternity, the supernatural order, or the order of grace. Secondly, to say one possesses a salvational ethics, is to say that man must be saved, or inversely, that he is "fallen" and is in need of restoration. Thus Christianity maintains that we have a supernatural end and that our natural powers fail us in our own efforts to reach this final good. The major question, for political philosophy, is whether civic virtues are truly virtues since they do not lead us to our final end. Or, to use Tertullian's words, what possible concord is there between the

virtues of "Athens" and "Jerusalem"?

The great political philosophers of the pagan world were the first to speak of civic virtues. They spoke of this subject according to the evidence of their senses, or better, they based their judgements on natural standards. Such an approach is fitting for the political community is of a temporal, historical nature. But, for Christianity, to say that the political community is part of nature is to call into question the objects belonging to this order as one must determine the effect original sin has had upon them. ² Any Christian discussion of these virtues must begin from a certain view of human nature: the political problem is the problem of sin. For concord to exist between philosophy and theology, nature must be viewed as possessing, to a certain extent, an ethical liberty to act on its own powers, guided by its own precepts. If this position is taken, virtues solely directed to the natural order can be viewed as possessing an ethical validity. As F. C. Copleston writes, "There is, of course, adequate justification for treating in philosophy of man in 'the state of nature', since the order of grace is super-natural and one can distinguish between the order of grace and the order of nature...[but] if one is principally interested in the soul's advance to God...then one's thought will centre round man in the concrete, and man in the concrete

² On this point see James V. Schall, "Displacing Damnation", The Thomist. Vol. 44 (1980): pp.27-44.

is man with a supernatural vocation." 3 Thus knowledge of a supernatural end for man does not necessarily deny the rectitude of the natural virtue within their own order; to embrace both theological and civic virtues is to accept man's position in both the order of grace and the order of nature.

The word virtue in Greek is arete, in Latin it is virtus. Arete means excellence, virtus denotes strength and power. 4 These terms imply the basic nature of any virtue. In order to transcend such differences as divide Plato and Aristotle (i.e., whether virtue is science), or Augustine and Aquinas (i.e., whether virtue is dependent on grace), virtue will be generally understood as implying the firm, steady disposition, or strength, to perform certain classes of actions--for example fortitude involving actions in relation to fear of death, and justice as that habit whereby one renders to others their due. These inner strengths are the excellences of men and women. They are the very foundation of character; they can be called one's "second nature". With these "habits" one engages in the pursuits typical of private and social life. If one discusses virtue within the context of an eudemonistic ethics, virtue is linked with the realization of our final good, or with a number of different goods belonging to various

3 Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy Book One (London: Doubleday, 1955), p.243.

4 See John A. Oesterle's Introduction to his translation of Aquinas' Treatise on the Virtues (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

spheres of human existence.

What is civic virtue? To begin, virtue-based political philosophy rejects political hedonism, which an attempt to build the state on passion, instead of reason. Both the Classical and the Medieval political community were founded on the qualities of self-restraint and justice, as opposed to selfishness and greed. Patriotism and devotion to the common good, and not the quest for individual "liberty", or rights, were seen to be the very pillars of the political community. ⁵ The possessors of these qualities- as well as courage and a host of other social virtues- were regarded by the pagan philosophers as being good citizens or "noble" gentlemen, or the bearers of the civic virtues. The two most famous pagan examples of the good citizen could very well be Cephalus--that old and loyal gentleman of Athens and the other would be the great-souled man as described by Aristotle in the pages of his Nicomachean Ethics. ⁶ Following this Classical tradition, the civic virtues will be understood as being those qualities which pertain to life in the political community. These virtues empower their possessor to contribute to the well-being, or the common good, of this form of community. It

⁵ See, for example, Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics as found in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1178d5-1178a10, and Plotinus, The Writings of Plotinus, ed. A. H. Armstrong, (London: George Allen and Unwin; Ltd., 1953), I.2.2-3.

⁶ See Harry Jaffa's Thomism and Aristotelianism (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979) for a discussion of Aristotle's understanding of the nature of the good citizen.

should be noted that the virtues of the truly good citizen extend beyond mere legal justice and devotion to the common good. Civic virtues direct our activity in relation to every aspect of social fellowship. For example friendliness and beneficence--which deal with political life outside of our adherence to the laws--are thus part of the civic virtues. ⁷ These virtues belong to the natural order for they are guided by prudence and acquired through self-effort.

This is a thesis on political philosophy, but when dealing with the writers of the Middle Ages one must come to terms with their theology. So although the subject matter of this thesis is the nature of the civic virtues, the theological virtues will also figure predominately in the following expositions. Briefly put, these are the Pauline virtues of faith, hope and charity through which one attains divine beatitude. They form a branch of ethics which can be referred to as salvational ethics, for by them corrupted nature is restored and directed to that supernatural end which is our true and complete happiness. Their existence is known by revelation and not by natural reason. They are the virtues which belong to the order of grace, as opposed to the natural order. ⁸

The various texts used for this thesis have been chosen

⁷ See Aquinas' discussion on the potential parts of justice in Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae. 80, 1.

⁸ See F. C. Copleston, op. cit., pp.242-3.

because their subject matter bears directly upon the problem outlined above. In each of the three following chapters the general arguments contained in each of the selected works will be discussed. Each argument will be presented in the form of an exposition. Any liberties which may have been taken with the texts would have arisen due only to stylistic demands. Augustine's answer to the problem of this thesis will be outlined in Chapter One. The exposition of Book XIX of the City of God will reveal a position which presents the civic virtues as being problematic from the viewpoint of salvational ethics. It will be argued that Augustine's critique of the natural virtues is based on the belief that original sin has flawed natural morality to such an extent that we cannot, without the liberty of grace, possess true virtues. The natural order cannot operate on its own for nature cannot lead us to happiness or enable us to produce works which are truly good, that is meritorious, unless aided by an exterior principle. 9

This position is modified by the arguments which are outlined in the next two chapters. Chapter Two will explicate

9 The battle between virtue and political hedonism is first played out in Augustine. In the City of God a thoroughly modern understanding of political hedonism is perceived in the workings of natural communities. It is at this point that the Classical project first faces a serious challenge in terms of the possibility of its being realized. Seen in this light, Machiavelli's concern with "reality" is a ruthless working through of Augustine's critique of the civic virtues. Thus Abelard's and Aquinas' modifications of Augustine's position on nature and virtue can be extended to modern theories of political hedonism.

the content of Peter Abelard's marriage of the pagan cardinal virtues and the theological virtues. For Abelard, the natural virtues of the pagan philosophers are presented as possessing an ethical worth independent of the meritorious qualities of the theological virtues. Although nature does not merit, it possesses a rational rectitude. Man's fall has not impeded the ethical sovereignty of the human agent insofar as the agent is acting under the direction and control of natural law, or natural reason. The pagan and the Christian are both good men, although their goodness exist in different degrees. As such, the civic virtues are presented as offering a form of rectitude to their possessors due to the harmony between philosophical and salvational ethics. While Aquinas also maintained a distinction between meritorious virtues, the theological virtues, and the natural virtues, he supported his synthesis by making use of Aristotelian teleology, or the idea of a worldly perfection. The third chapter will therefore examine Aquinas' Aristotelian understanding of the civic virtues. Human nature is presented as retaining a sufficient degree of ethical liberty even after the Fall to seek after a natural order of virtues and goods. It is within this conception of eudaemonistic ethics that Aquinas places, and examines, the civic virtues.

Finally, it must be noted that histories of Medieval political philosophy tend to present its teachings from the modern concern with divisions of powers or with the

development of liberal democratic political institutions. ¹⁰ The Christian account of virtue-based political philosophy, or the 'baptism' of the Classical Tradition is largely ignored despite the fact that Roman and Greek philosophers, namely Cicero and Aristotle, occupied central positions in their accounts of the nature of things political. While it is true that Christianity questioned much of the pagan teaching on civic virtue, this questioning serves to demonstrate the degree to which virtue remained in the forefront of their political philosophy. The concern of this thesis with the civic virtues presents Christian political philosophy within the general debate between Athens and Jerusalem, that is, within the debate between nature or reason and grace or faith, instead of presenting this philosophy as a precursor to liberalism.

¹⁰ See two of the more famous histories- Walter Ullmann's A History of Political Thought: the Middle Ages (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1965) and John Morrall's Political Thought in Medieval Times (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

CHAPTER ONE--ST. AUGUSTINE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Augustine has been called a bridge builder between the pagan world of Greece and Rome and the newly emerging Christian world. ¹ It is therefore fitting to begin this study of Christian views of the civic virtues with a man who was both Christian and Roman. It must first be noted that Augustine's conception of politics underwent a number of profound changes during his life. ² The choice of texts will therefore be an important factor in the presentation of Augustine's teaching on the civic virtues. This chapter will generally concentrate on his mature ethical philosophy, particularly as is found in Book XIX of the City of God. The essence of this stage in Augustine's intellectual development can be briefly stated as centring around the rejection of a neo-Platonic understanding of the relationship between the political order and the 'cosmic' order; a relationship which was mediated by the civic virtues. This rejection was caused by an increased awareness of the political ramifications of theological anthropology. Simply put, Augustine's reading of St. Paul in the 390s led him to question whether human nature

¹ See Christopher Dawson, "St. Augustine and His Age", A Monument to St. Augustine (London: Ward and Sheen, 1930).

² For a study of the development of Augustine's thought see R. A. Markus's Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Chapter 4.

was able to realize the best political order on earth due to the effects of the Fall. As Herbert Deane writes, "Once sin entered the world through Adam's descendants, it became absolutely impossible for any man to lead a good life or to attain salvation by attempting to carry out the precepts of the law of nature." ³ To study this stage in Augustine's development is to study his critique of the natural virtues.

In the pages of Book XIX, the reader finds one of the clearest demarcations of the boundary between the natural, or civic, and the theological virtues. The foundation of this division lies in the tension between the two poles of human nature which are marked by the corruption caused by the Fall and the restoration caused by grace. Placed within this anthropology, the natural virtues are deemed to be problematic insofar as human nature is corrupt. The general thrust of Augustine's critique of the natural virtues is summed up in the passage: "...the virtues on which the mind preens itself as giving control over the body and its urges, and which aim at any other purpose or possession than God, are in point of fact vices rather than virtues." ⁴ Here two specific criticisms of natural virtues are made. The first relates to the inability of individuals to fully control their passions, or the movements of cupidity, via a process of self-acquired

³ See Herbert Deane, The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine (U.S.A.: Columbia University Press, 1963), p.94.

⁴ Augustine, City of God (New York: Doubleday, 1958), XIX, 25.

discipline. This is partly directed against the claims of the Stoics who argued that the function of virtue was to purge the body of its passions. ⁵ Augustine seriously doubts the ability of virtue to control the urges of the flesh, due to the effects on man of the Fall. As such this is a criticism of those moral philosophers who linked virtue with the cultivation of the mind, or with wisdom. For Augustine, virtues find their "first cause" in grace, not in any natural process of the human intellect or will. ⁶ This connects to the second elements of his critique which is contained in the phrase "...which aim at any other purpose..." and which censures the natural end of pagan virtue--viz. civic life, and any other form of earthly well-being.

Augustine's critique of the natural virtues cannot be understood apart from his acceptance of the general framework of pagan eudaemonistic ethics. According to Augustine (as for the Greeks) we are led to our final good by the virtues. Of course the crux of the problem lies in the location of this good. To obtain beatitude one must possess virtues which are quite different from those known by the pagans; true virtues

⁵ For a discussion on Stoic ethics see A. H. Armstrong, An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy (New Jersey: Rowman and Allan Ltd., 1977), Chapter XI.

⁶ On the relationship between pagan and Augustinian understanding to the ability of the will (eros) to direct itself towards the good, via an educational process, see Robert E. Meager, An Introduction to Augustine (New York: New York University Press, 1978), pp.6-9 and Robert Crouse's "The Conversion of Philosophy in Augustine's Confessions" in Dionysius, Vol. XI, Dec. (1987): pp.53-62.

must direct their possessors beyond the reaches of their impaired nature. True virtues must therefore be understood in the context of a psychological struggle for the existence of a right order between our desire for temporal goods as ends in themselves and our spiritual quest for our final end in God. To choose between God or temporal goods is to choose between virtue and vice. As Augustine writes, "...the happiness of man can come not from himself but only from God, and...to live according to oneself is sin and to sin is to lose God...therefore, we said that two contrary and opposing cities arose because some men live according to the flesh and other live according to the spirit..." ⁷ Now it is only by grace that we are able to choose well, and thus only with the aid of grace is it possible for men and women to acquire true virtues. Augustine's eudaemonistic ethics is a salvational ethics which criticizes the natural virtues precisely because they remain at the level of nature.

The pagan virtues are replaced by those qualities which Augustine refers to as being true, or genuine, virtues. ⁸ True virtues include both the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues. ⁹ Faith, hope and charity are true

⁷ See Augustine, op. cit., XIV, 4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See also Augustine's, The Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1966), XV. Also see John Coyle's Augustine's "De moribus ecclesiae catholicae" (Fribourg: The University Press, 1978).

virtues because they direct man to his final end. The cardinal virtues of the pagans are transformed, or baptized, into true virtues because their role is seen as aiding man in his struggle, against the urges of the flesh, to remain directed towards God. The Christianization of the cardinal virtues, and hence the rejection of purely natural virtues, can be seen in the passage where he writes, "No wisdom is true wisdom unless all that it decides with prudence, does with fortitude, disciplines with temperance, and distributes with justice is directed to that goal in which God is to be all in all..." ¹⁰ In short, true virtues are conceived of as fostering and supporting the soul's direction to God. This will be discussed in section 1.2

The civic virtues are as problematic as they are natural. These virtues are concerned with social life, or with the fellowship and peace which is necessary for any type of communal project. These qualities cannot be considered as true virtues insofar as they are natural virtues for they do not meet the definition of true virtues discussed above. To say this does not mean that Augustine thought that Christians did not need to partake in political life. As Augustine writes, "This peace [of the soul] the pilgrim City already possesses by faith and it lives holily and according to this faith so long as, to attain its heavenly completion, it refers every good act done for God or for his fellow man. I say 'fellow

¹⁰ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 20.

man' because, of course, any community life must emphasize social relationship." ¹¹ Notice that the activity of virtues includes our duty to God and our fellow citizens. True virtues have a "political" aspect. These two ends of virtue are related, or only by loving God can we properly love our fellow citizens. Thus just social relationships, which are realized by the civic virtues, obtain a rectitude only through grace, or rather when nature is restored by the soul turning towards God. Just as the natural virtues are unable to realize the proper order in man, the natural civic virtues are unable to realize the proper order between men. ¹² Civic virtues, as found in the pagan, will be discussed in section 1.3. In section 1.4, civic virtues will be discussed as they are found in the Christian.

1.2 THE AUGUSTINIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

Augustine's definition of true virtues, and thus his critique of the natural virtues, is explicitly discussed in Chapter 4 of Book XIX. Now Augustine does not totally reject the cardinal virtues, instead he interprets their function in terms of Christian ethical life. Augustine's moral philosophy combines elements of pagan and Christian teaching. He writes, after discussing the necessity for possessing the virtues of

¹¹ Ibid, XIX, 17.

¹² Oliver O'Donovan, "Augustine's City of God XIX and Western Political Thought" in Dionysius, Vol XI (Dec. 1987).

faith and hope in this earthly life, that "Of course, the Apostle was not speaking of men lacking prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice, but of men whose virtues were true virtues because the men were living by faith." ¹³ Yet, as will become clear below, these cardinal virtues do not have the same function as those discussed by the pagans. These four virtues are placed within the quest for beatitude, as opposed to earthly felicity. Their function is placed in the context of the struggle between the urges of the spirit and the flesh. These virtues do not make us happy, they only ensure that we are not turned away from our holy quest by the urges of the flesh. The cardinal virtues aid in "bridling" the flesh, so that we can be guided by reason, or the spirit.

To begin this discussion of Augustine's understanding of true virtues, this topic will first be treated from the point of view of the end of virtue. Augustine shares with the Classical philosophers the idea that virtue and man's supreme good are thoroughly linked. The eudaemonistic temper of Augustine's ethics influenced his critique of the natural virtues. Christianity holds that the final good of human life transcends any form of earthly happiness envisioned by the pagans. Accordingly true virtues must be understood in relation to this supernatural good. As Augustine writes, the City of God maintains "... that eternal life is the supreme good and eternal death the supreme evil, and that we should

¹³ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 4.

live rightly in order to obtain the one and avoid the other." ¹⁴ Following Varro, Augustine argues that every natural good fails to meet the requirements of man's true end. Now Varro- whose summary of the teachings of the pagan philosophers provided a source for Augustine's arguments- stated that man's good could rest in the body or the soul. The insecurity and fluidity of these goods are the starting points for Augustine's critique of the attempt to locate happiness in this life. Regarding the goods of the body Augustine responds that "As for the primary satisfactions of our nature [prima naturae], when or where or how can they be so securely possessed in this life that they are not subject to the ups and downs of fortune?" ¹⁵ The life of reason does not fair better for this type of felicity also lacks security and stability: "How much sensation does a man have left if, for example, he goes deaf and blind? And where does the reason or intelligence go...when sickness unsettles the mind?" ¹⁶ Augustine paints a rather gloomy picture of human life in order to show the superiority of the Christian teachings on man's true end. This must be taken with a grain of salt. Consider, for example, how Augustine hints that some form of happiness can be found here on earth when the terms "happiness" and "unhappiness" are reversed in the following

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

passage: "You cannot maintain that just because unhappiness is short-lived it is really not unhappiness at all; or, what is more preposterous, that because unhappiness is short-lived it deserves to be called happiness". ¹⁷ Augustine is not attempting, in his critique of natural goods, to prove that these are not goods, or that happiness is simply impossible in this life. This critique is an attempt to direct our attention to a good--beatitude--which, because of its stability and completeness, qualifies as our true final good.

Why would Augustine seek to attack--with such effective rhetoric--the idea of earthly felicity? In part this paves the way for his treatment of the ends of the two Cities which occurs in the final two chapters of the Book XIX and highlights the insufficiencies of the pagan teachings on virtue. The natural virtues do not make us happy because they do not point beyond nature, to that City where we are truly made perfect with joy. To say this is to view earthly life as a struggle to reach this higher end--a struggle with vice, or cupidity. Augustine writes, "...what is the life of virtue save one unending war with evil inclinations, and not with solicitations of other people alone, but with evil inclinations that arise within ourselves and are our very own." ¹⁸ In any case, the theological virtues, and not the cardinal virtues, occupy the prime role in our quest for

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

peace. Since the natural virtues cannot make us happy, and since the pagans have argued that virtues can make us happy, Classical moral philosophies must be seriously flawed.

The teachings of Classical moral philosophy on the nature of the cardinal virtues are transformed by Augustine in light of his understanding of the individual's earthly struggle to be happy in the City of God. Seen in this light, the cardinal virtues do not make us happy, they are comforts which enable us to endure our earthly pilgrimage without falling into the way of error. Correcting the pagans, Augustine writes, "They would have realized that man's very virtues, his best and most useful possessions, are the most stolid evidences of the miseries of life, precisely because their function is to stand by him in perils and problems and pains." ¹⁹ It is in keeping with this understanding of the function of the virtues that Augustine interprets each of the four cardinal virtues.

The first two virtues which Augustine treats in Book XIX are prudence and temperance. The function of these two virtues is closely related. Both virtues are conceived of as helping the individual avoid falling into error: the commands of prudence are translated into action by the virtue of temperance. These virtues, like all of the cardinal virtues, are concerned with the operations of the passions. Temperance is needed because it, as Augustine writes, "...must bridle our fleshly lusts if they are not to drag our will to consent to

¹⁹ Ibid.

abominations of every sort." **20** Augustine, now partially arguing against the philosophies of the Stoics and their inhuman ideal of the state of Apathy, stresses the rebellious and unbreakable power of our passions. This idea carries over into his treatment of prudence. Prudence is necessary because earthly life is filled with dangers, or better, temptations, which the Christian must studiously avoid. As Augustine writes "...this virtue [is] constantly on the lookout to distinguish what is good from what is evil, so that there may be no mistake made in seeking the one and avoiding the other..." **21** Good activity is not solely dependent on knowing what to do, as no man, despite the magnitude of his wisdom (or faith), can completely suppress the rebellious nature of the flesh: "For there lives no man so perfected in wisdom as not to have some conflict with excessive desires." **22** These two virtues do not bring happiness for their ceaseless activity is a sign that peace cannot be found here on earth. As Augustine writes, "Yet neither prudence nor temperance can rid this life of the evils that are their constant concern." **23** These virtues testify to the fact that

20 Ibid. Special attention should be paid to the image of a bridle for, as is discussed in the chapter on Aquinas, this understanding of virtue differs from the Aristotelian understanding of moral virtue as a habit of, as opposed to against, the passions.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

individuals are torn between the desires of the spirit and the flesh. To live in such a struggle is not to possess peace.

The virtue of justice is related to the order which exists among the parts of the soul, and the order which exists between the soul and other rational beings: "Its task is to see that to each is given what belongs to each. And this holds for the right order within man himself, so that it is just for the soul to be subordinated to God, and the body to the soul, and thus for body and soul taken together to be subject to God." ²⁴ The tension between the flesh and the spirit described above underscores the impossibility of realizing this right order with any sort of permanence or stability. The urges of the flesh compel us to love earthly things as ends in themselves, despite the counsels of reason; greed and pride lead us to pervert the right and proper order which should exist among our fellow citizens. As Augustine writes, "So long, then, as such weakness, such moral sickness remains within us, how can we dare to say that we are out of danger; and, if not yet out of danger, how can we say that happiness is complete?" ²⁵ Again the virtue of justice does not make us happy, instead it ensures that we avoid the pitfalls, the temptations, which can steer us away from happiness.

The question of danger brings the reader to fortitude,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

whose purpose is "...devised to support and steel a man..." ²⁶ Fortitude is a virtue which relates to Augustine's understanding of the role of virtue as a comforter for earthly life. The treatment of this virtue highlights Augustine's refusal to link virtues with earthly felicity. As Augustine writes, "Is not its very function- to bear patiently with misfortune--overwhelming evidence that human life is beset with unhappiness, however wise a man may be?" ²⁷ Augustine draws the reader's attention to the case of the Stoic Cato. The Stoics, who claimed that this life offered true happiness, and that virtue was its cause, did not regard the suicide of Cato as problematic according to the precepts of their teachings. Augustine draws upon the weakness of Cato in an attempt to show that virtues cannot be identified as the source of happiness. For if this is the case "...how can anyone deny that the ills that made Cato's life unhappy and unlivable were real evils?" ²⁸ What can be said of Cato can be said of everyone's life. Fortitude does not lead to happiness, it is a support which enable us to bear with the miseries of this life as we seek after true happiness in the next.

Although it was the pagans who first conceived of the cardinal virtues, Augustine's general critique of the natural

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

virtues would lead the reader to assume that these virtues, as found in the pagan, are not true virtues. This is the case because the function of the cardinal virtues has been linked to our quest for beatitude. Now this does not mean that the pagans did not possess certain qualities or habits; one can think of many examples of pagan "bravery", and one can cite examples of pagan "temperance". ²⁹ The difference between fortitude and temperance as possessed by the pagan and as conceived by Augustine cannot lie in the mere act of steadfastness or self-control. The difference between good and bad qualities, or better, true virtues and spurious virtues, lies in their end. After all, a gang of thieves can be brave and moderate in their struggle to gain power, wealth, or fame. ³⁰ Now the true end of virtue is happiness, and on the true source of happiness Augustine is quite clear. This being the case, it follows that the virtues of the pagans should be viewed as being problematic.

The cardinal virtues, as interpreted by Augustine, are situated in the context of a struggle between the flesh and spirit. This can be seen as a struggle between two types of

²⁹ Augustine states that the Romans were brave and moderate in City of God, V, 15.

³⁰ About the Romans, Augustine writes, "Let us reflect what good things they despised, what suffering they sustained, what passions they subdued for human glory- the sole reward such marvellous virtues merited." City of God, V, 19. Notice that Augustine refers to these qualities as virtues. As noted above, Augustine uses rhetoric to make many of his points. Strictly speaking these are not true virtues. But then neither are they really vices.

love. **31** The activities of love can be divided into two distinct movements: charity or cupidity. This twofold division is created by the type of ends towards which we can seek. These ends can be either spiritual, that is God and his presence in creation, or temporal, for example material goods or possessions such as fame or power. **32** As Augustine writes, "I call 'charity' the motion of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for his own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbour for the sake of God; but 'cupidity' is a motion of the soul towards the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God." **33** There is a connection between charity and virtue, cupidity and vice. This connection is based on the end towards which virtue is directed.

How can the individual turn from these 'hollow' temporal objects of love to those of an eternal nature? The virtues of the Stoics or the Platonists or the Romans could be acquired

31 My understanding of Augustinian love is based on Alasdair MacIntyre's Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 153-156. For an explicit discussion of the relationship between love and activity see The Confessions (Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), XII, 9.

32 John Coyle expresses the theological foundation of this reasoning when he wrote, "if God alone can be truly loved, he alone can be enjoyed (*frui*) as a legitimate object of love; everything else may be used (*uti*) insofar as it does not turn us away from him". See Coyle. op.cit., p.81.

33 See Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, tr. D.W. Robertson (U.S.A.: Library of the Liberal Arts, 1958), III, x. Compare with On Free Choice of the Will (U.S.A.: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974), Book III.

naturally, because the end of these virtues were natural. Man's true good, as has been shown, is above nature. Now due to the effects of the Fall, humanity no longer naturally possesses its original liberty to move towards God. ³⁴ No natural process can be sufficient to begin the movement towards God and away from temporal objects. Virtue cannot be equated with wisdom, as education of eros is not sufficient for the acquisition of the virtues as it was in the theories of the Platonists. True virtues, as Augustine writes, have their roots in grace by which "we are inflamed with that full and perfect love which prevents us from turning away from Him and causes us to be conformed to Him rather than to the World". ³⁵ Grace restores the original liberty of love, or the will. By grace we are converted to God and averted from the objects desired by the flesh. ³⁶ Now as the pagans lacked grace, they could not be truly converted to God. As such, their moral philosophies must be surpassed by Christian salvational ethics if the promise of the Greeks and Romans--happiness--is to be fully realized. Augustine's discussion of true virtues, and his critique of the natural virtues, is an attempt to realize the promise of the Greeks by drawing on the teachings of the Gospels.

³⁴ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 4.

³⁵ Augustine, On the Morals of the Catholic Church, XIII, 23.

³⁶ See generally Etienne Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine (New York: Random House, 1960), Chapter III.

1.3 PAGAN CIVIC VIRTUES

As stated above, the civic virtues, as known by the pagans, are not true virtues because their end is not true happiness. Now true virtues direct us to God and guide us in our dealings with our fellow citizens. As shown above, natural virtues fail to lead us to true happiness; now it will be shown that the natural virtues fail to fulfil their promise in regards to social life. Put briefly, if a just political order can only be realized by true virtues, natural political communities cannot be seen as possessing a just order. This point is made by Augustine in his disagreement with Cicero over the definition of a commonwealth. ³⁷ By examining this debate it will be shown that political justice--as well as the civic virtues in general--fails to qualify as a true virtue. Now Augustine states, against the opinion of Cicero, that the pagans never co-operated for a common good and that the right order of justice lay beyond the scope of both the Classical polity and its citizens. ³⁸ What Augustine meant by this disagreement will occupy this section; in answering this question it will be shown how the civic virtues of the pagans were tainted by the Fall in relation to both their duty to God and to neighbour.

³⁷ See Jeremy Adams, The Populus of Augustine and Jerome (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), Appendix A for a summary of various discussions on Augustine's understanding of a res publica.

³⁸ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 21.

To begin with a brief background to the debate will be offered. Augustine sums up the position he desires to argue against when he writes that, "...[Scipio, Cicero's mouthpiece] endorsed in a few words the stand that 'the commonwealth is the weal of the people.' He defines the people as 'not any mass gathering, but a multitude bound together by a mutual recognition of rights and a mutual cooperation for the common good'." ³⁹ The two elements of Cicero's political philosophy with which Augustine is concerned relates to the cooperation for the common good and the order which arises from justice. Augustine's correction of Cicero leads to a questioning of the nature of pagan political fellowship, or the type of society brought into being by the civic virtues. This debate with Cicero can thus be read as a critique of the pagan civic virtues.

Augustine cannot accept Cicero's understanding of a commonwealth and replaces it with his own definition. A people can be said to exist "...so long as we have a multitude of rational beings--and not of irresponsible cattle--who are voluntarily associated in the pursuit of common interests..." ⁴⁰ Although this is a concise definition, it can be applied to every pagan political community- from its grandest tyrannies to its greatest republics: "Of course, what I have said of the Romans and their Republic applies not less

³⁹ Ibid, II, 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid, XIX, 24.

to the Athenians and other Greek communities, to the Egyptians, to the early Assyrians of Babylonia, and, in general, to any other pagan people whose government exercised real political control, however much or little." ⁴¹ It is important to note that the terms justice and good have been replaced by 'common interest', or common love. This is important because it is love--namely the tension between cupidity and charity--which underscores Augustine's attack on the natural civic virtues via the political philosophy of Cicero.

Augustine first criticizes Cicero according to the idea that the civic virtues of the pagans were directed to the common good. In doing this, Augustine does not imply that the pagans sought to undermine the political community by their "virtues", instead he argues that their civic virtues prevented their possessors from ever obtaining any true good from political life. As pagan political life did not look beyond itself, its ends and virtues remained limited to the temporal horizon. Hindered from moving towards beatitude, the pagans had to be content with earthly life, and as shown above, Augustine doubts whether this could truly be said to offer any form of felicity. ⁴² As Augustine writes, "What shall I say of the common good whose common pursuit knits men together...Careful scrutiny will show that there is no such

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Ibid., XIX, 12 in general.

good for those who live irreligiously." 43 This statement needs to be qualified. Now while real goods are gained from life in a political community, they cannot be called true goods unless they are referred to our final end by true virtues: "When we mortal men, living amid the realities of earth, enjoy the utmost peace which life can give us, then it is the part of virtue, if we are living rightly, to make right use of the goods we are enjoying." 44 Pagan civic virtues make bad use of the benefits of communal life. As it is only by virtue that right use arises, the civic virtues of the pagans are problematic because they excluded God as a final end. On this account--that is from the perspective of the ends of political activity--the pagan community possesses neither virtues nor goods, in the true sense of these words.

It is also argued that true justice never existed in the pagan political community as the pagans were never ordered to God. 45 More precisely it is argued that the pagans never possessed true justice because they failed to offer to God his due. The pagans, not knowing God, and lacking grace, were unable to love Him, that is, give Him his due. Augustine writes, "Justice is the virtue which accords to each and every

43 Ibid, XIX, 21.

44 Ibid, XIX, 10.

45 It is interesting to note that Augustine refers only to pagan communities- including the Roman Republic, and not the later Christianized empire. One might assume that under a Christian ruler, justice could be found. See City of God, XIX, 24.

man what is his due. What then shall we say of a man's 'justice' when he takes himself away from the true God and hands himself over to dirty demons?" ⁴⁶ In these two sentences Augustine exposes one of the predominant differences between Christianity and the Classical world on the question of justice: the latter type of justice is wholly between men, as is stated in the first sentence; Christian justice includes a duty to God as well. The range of justice has been greatly expanded, and justice has been linked to charity--it includes the devotion of the soul to God.

True justice is also linked to worship of God because, as Augustine writes, "Where justice is wanting, in the sense that the civil community does not take its orders from one supreme God...where neither the individuals nor the whole community, 'the people', live by that faith of the just which works that charity which loves God as He should be loved and one's neighbour as oneself--where this kind of justice is lacking, I maintain, there does not exist 'a multitude bound together by a mutual recognition of rights...' " ⁴⁷ True justice ensures a proper order among men, or a certain type of fellowship which is based on charity. Right order, and hence true justice, arises from the desire to serve God and adhere to a Christian vision of the nature of social life. As Augustine writes, "Out of all this love [charity] he will

⁴⁶ Ibid, XIX, 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid, XIX, 23.

arrive at peace, as much as in him lies, with every man--at that human peace which is regulated fellowship." 48 This state of affairs can only arise with the aid of grace, as it is only by grace that one can turn towards God and seek to live according to his peace. As the pagans lacked grace, or since they did not serve God, it follows that their political orders are opposed to that "ordered fellowship" based on charity and which realizes true justice between God and man, and man and man.

Now if Augustine is right, pagan political communities did not possess true justice. Yet it would seem as if these communities possessed a certain kind of order, or a certain type of social peace. Now Augustine argues that not every type of order can be called good, nor is every type of peace a truly good peace. Yet order is better than chaos and peace is better than war. To grasp Augustine's thought on this point is to understand the difference between true justice and the "political" justice by which the good pagan citizen lived. Augustine writes that "Peace, in its final sense, is the calm that comes of order. Order is an arrangement of like and unlike things whereby each of them is disposed in its proper place." 49 Now justice orders both the soul and the political community. To be more precise, the order of the

48 Ibid, XIX, 14.

49 Ibid, XIX, 13. In the particular case which we are examining the 'like' and 'unlike' things are the rulers and the ruled.

political community is realized by men and women possessing the virtue of justice. Yet the pagans did not worship the true God, so it cannot be said that there was a right order in their souls. Augustine writes, "...what fragment of justice can there be in a man who is not subject to God, if, indeed, it is a fact that such a one cannot rightfully exercise dominion-soul over body, human reason over sinful propensities?". ⁵⁰ Since each pagan lacked true justice, Augustine is correct in rejecting Cicero's political philosophy. While the pagans were able to "order" themselves and their communities according to earthly standards, they could not order themselves to God, nor could they order their communities in such a fashion as to realize the justice which orders the members of the City of God. Pagan civic virtues were good, in a sense, because they produced a political peace. But this accomplishment, when viewed in the light of Christian social teaching, is revealed to be only a second-best form of morality.

While the pagans lacked what is called true justice-- the good citizens of the Classical world possessed political justice: a pale and shadowy image of its original. The scope of pagan justice is declared to be limited to realizing political peace: "...the earthly city which does not live by faith seeks only an earthly peace, and limits the goal of its peace, of its harmony of authority and obedience among its

⁵⁰ Ibid, XIX, 21.

citizens, to the voluntary and collective attainment of objectives necessary to mortal existence." 51 Augustine does not deny that this form of peace is truly a good, if used for the right end. Political peace is brought about by the existence of a certain order, or rational agreement. This condition reflects the proper means of realizing the true end of this association; within Augustine's teleological science "The peace of the political community is an ordered harmony of authority and obedience between citizens." 52 The pagans did achieve a certain type of peace and a certain type of order, but this statement needs to be qualified in light of the higher standards of human existence which Augustine possesses.

Again it is seen that the virtues of the natural man are insufficient to confer rectitude on actions. The critique of the natural civic virtues in the City of God centres on the problems arising within the moral life of the political community due to the disorder introduced into nature by man's fall from grace; it is the Fall which makes the best political order unrealizable in this world. 53 Grace and politics must be united for civic virtues are in need of restoration.

51 Ibid, XIX, 17.

52 Ibid, XIX, 12.

53 See, generally, R. A. Markus, "The Latin Fathers", The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, ed. J.H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.108-111.

As such, Cicero's assertion that justice was part of the foundation of every political community must be erroneous. ⁵⁴ While men and women are naturally able to realize a "political" peace--this order pales in comparison with the social life of the City of God. Now the Christian is a pilgrim member of this City. Thus it should follow that the Christian possesses civic virtues which are of a different nature from those of the pagans. To this question, this chapter now turns.

1.4 CIVIC VIRTUES AS FOUND IN THE CHRISTIAN

Augustine centred much of his treatment of the civic virtues as they exist in the pagan, that is civic morality before the rectification by grace. When examined in this fashion, it seems that the civic virtues are not true virtues because their end is wholly temporal. Now the Christian is described as a pilgrim who lives a life of faith, hope and charity within the earthly city. As such, the Christian is a citizen like the pagan. The difference between the Christian and the pagan citizen is that the peace--which the Christian seeks with his or her neighbours is motivated by charity; it is God's peace, not that of man. It follows that Christian civic virtues are of a different nature than those possessed by the pagan.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *City of God*, II,21. See also B. Roland-Gosselin, "St. Augustine's Systems of Morals", A Monument to St. Augustine, pp.236-238.

Augustine states that the Christian should embrace the requirements, and enjoy the benefits, of civic life with as much zeal as does the pagan. This agreement with Classical philosophy is based on the emphasis which Augustine places on social life: "What we Christians like better is their teaching that the life of virtue should be a social life. For, if the life of the saints had not been social, how could the City of God...reach its appointed goal?". ⁵⁵ The good man needs the assistance of the city to supply him with the necessities which are required to sustain human life; these goods are not enjoyed, but used in order for the good man to reach his reward upon death. As political peace and the goods gained from this peace are used by the Christian, the Christian must attempt to ensure that these goods are brought into being. Now this is partly brought about through political justice. Augustine writes that the earthbound City of God "has no hesitation about keeping in step with the civil law which governs matters pertaining to our existence here below. For, as mortal life is the same for all, there ought to be a common cause between the two cities in what concerns our purely human living." ⁵⁶ As such, both Christian and pagan follow the laws and customs of their communities because both types of men are in need of the goods which arises from political life. Yet the Christian has a relationship with the goods

⁵⁵ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 15

⁵⁶ Ibid, XIX, 17.

of political life which is fundamentally different than that found in the pagan- one which is based on the difference occurring between use and enjoyment within Augustine's teaching on virtue and vice. This difference is founded on grace. The Christian desires political peace for the sake of heavenly peace. ⁵⁷ Christian civic virtues support political life while referring its benefits to a higher end. It is in this sense that civic virtues are true virtues.

Augustine contrasts the pagan citizen with the Christian citizen in his discussion of the duty of the judge and the nature of the philosophic life. ⁵⁸ Now the wise judge is aware of the problems of realizing true justice within any given society. Yet the judge is also aware of the social benefits arising from our defective systems of justice. The worth of judicial activity arises from its function within the political community. The judge seeks to bring peace between the citizens of the res publica--the peace necessary for human existence. He or she realizes that there exists a social obligation which cannot be ignored. This serves as a model for the Christian who is bound in duty to serve as a good citizen

⁵⁷ Ibid, XIX, 14. Augustine writes, "In the earthly city, then, temporal goods are to be used with a view to the enjoyment of earthly peace, whereas, in the heavenly City, they are used with a view to the enjoyment of eternal peace".

⁵⁸ In both cases, Augustine stands as a living example of his philosophy. His life was truly mixed- thinker and bishop- and included among his duties as a bishop were judicial activities. See Peter Brown, Augustine of Hippo- A Biography, Chapter 17.

by establishing earthly peace, even though the political community does not mirror true justice. ⁵⁹ The Christian, out of charity, Augustine writes, "...must help his wife, children, servants, and all others whom he can influence. He must wish, moreover, to be similarly helped by his fellow man, in case he himself needs such assistance." ⁶⁰

In Augustine's treatment of the good life, the active life of a citizen is commended. While Augustine agrees that the philosophic life is best, contemplation should be mixed with civic duty--the best life is described as existing when "philosophers, are actually engaged in the administration of state affairs or other human enterprises." ⁶¹ This could be seen as Augustine's baptism of the pagan gentleman, or the reappearance, on a higher level of being, of the natural citizen of the Classical polis. The Christian philosophy of Augustine shines forth when it is written that "No man must be so committed to contemplation as...to give no thought to his neighbour's needs or as absorbed in action as to dispense with the contemplation of God." ⁶² The good man is told that it is among his duties to acquire the virtues of a good

⁵⁹ This can be idea can be clearly seen in Augustine's discussion of slavery. While slavery is originally against nature, it serves as part of the remedy for corrupted nature. Its value lies in its utility for political well-being.

⁶⁰ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 14.

⁶¹ See City of God, XIX 1 and 19 for Augustine's reflections on the mixture of philosophy and power.

⁶² Ibid, XIX, 19.

citizen--for both love of self and love of others. ⁶³ In short, Augustine's critique of the natural civic virtues is balanced by a theory of true civic virtues.

Augustine presents his readers with two types of citizens- both extremely different from each other, yet similar in the sense that they both help to foster the political community. Both pagan and Christian civic virtues help the city, but only one type fosters the well-being of the soul. Yet this statement must be qualified. About those great citizens of the Roman Republic, Augustine writes, "After all, the pagans subordinated their private property to the common welfare, that is to the republic and the public treasury. They resisted the temptations to avarice. They gave their counsel freely in the councils of the state." ⁶⁴ Now if the final end of human life was to be a citizen, these civic virtues would be true virtues. As this is not the case, these virtues must be judged in relation to our true end. Once this is done one sees that although these men were good, in their way, which is the way of the world, mankind cannot be justified

⁶³ Compare this position with Cicero's own position in Book II of his On Duties. Augustine writes, "Nor should the man of action love worldly position or power...but only what can be properly and usefully accomplished by means of such position and power, in the sense which I have explained of contributing to the eternal salvation of those committed to one's care" (City of God, XIX, 19) Thus power is not an end in-itself. If power is so viewed, the act would be a rebellion against God.

⁶⁴ Augustine, City of God, V, 15. On the end of these masters of the known world see XIX, 28. Compare with Augustine's agreement with Cicero on the nature of Roman morality at II, 21.

solely in terms of nature. As Etienne Gilson writes, "Let us admit that the Christian virtues are useful to the good order and prosperity of the commonwealth; still, it is no less true that this order and prosperity cannot be their proper end." ⁶⁵ Even the virtues by which the Christian serves to foster social life, find their final end in God.

1.5 CONCLUSION

The outcome of this exposition has been the position that the gap between the virtues of the Christian and the natural man is based on the Augustinian separation between the natural order, which has been severely corrupted due to the effects of original sin, and the order of grace. Accordingly there is a clear difference between natural and Christian ethics. This difference can be said to be based on the end towards which the Christian virtues move. Now these virtues are only open to us insofar as we are aided by God. Nature, which cannot move toward God, cannot, therefore, bring into being, on its own, any true virtues.

Natural political life is problematic not only in terms of its ends, also in its relationship to the ideal civic life embodied in the City of God. The civic virtues cannot be called unqualifiable good due to the effects of the Fall upon man's ability to realize a right order in his dealings with

⁶⁵ Etienne Gilson, "Introduction" to the Fathers of the Church's translation of City of God (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p.19.

other men. Natural man lacks the qualities to achieve the fellowship and proper peace which was intended to define his communal life. ⁶⁶ Instead of the peace among men and woman desired for us by God, man "...hates the peace of God which is just and prefers his own peace which is unjust." ⁶⁷ The political community is in need of something greater than the greatest of the pagan rulers--the political community is in need of God's help for the more perfect realization of a good political order. Only grace can lead individuals to true virtue, and only true virtue can establish the more perfect order between God and man, body and soul, citizen and citizen. This order, beyond the natural capabilities of fallen man, mirrors the natural, fallen, world of endless quests for worldly honours and glories. ⁶⁸ Augustine declares that the civic virtues--or the best realizable social order--are wholly dependent upon religion.

This relationship between the natural man and the Christian is modified by later thinkers. The depreciation of natural civic virtues in Book XIX is one possible

⁶⁶ Augustine, City of God, XIX, 24 and 27.

⁶⁷ Ibid, XIX, 12.

⁶⁸ Vanity was the major vice of the Romans. Their pride was the source of their civic virtues. Glory, or the satisfaction of the ego, was their secret aim. This is mirrored in the delusion, or insanity, of the pagan wise man. While the ego can build empires, its projection in the world of intellectual pursuits causes error. Thus both the life of contemplation and action stands guilt of pride in Augustine's eyes. See City of God, XIX, 4 and II 22-28.

interpretation of revelation. The teachings of Book XIX have been acclaimed as being the most famous and influential for subsequent Christian exegesis on political life. ⁶⁹ Abelard and Aquinas, who will be encountered in the following chapters, can be seen as moderating the Augustinian tradition, whether embodied in the person of Bernard of Clairvaux or St. Bonaventure. As this thesis turns to Abelard, an alternative view of the civic virtues will be explored: a Christian affirmation of the natural ethical life of the political community.

⁶⁹ See John O'Meara's Introduction to the City of God (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1984).

CHAPTER TWO--PETER ABELARD

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the writings of Peter Abelard one finds a political philosophy which posits a harmony between the ethical life of the natural man and the Christian. ¹ This subject is discussed in one of the most famous of Abelard's works: A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian. ² For Abelard the heart of the relationship between nature and grace, which can also be formulated as the relationship between natural reason and the moral dimensions of revelation, is the connection between virtue and man's final good: the two elements of an eudaemonistic ethics. Accordingly, these concepts receive an elaborate analysis in the Dialogue.

A brief discussion of the general action and purpose of this work will suffice to explicate the manner in which Abelard approached these concepts and their relationship. The three characters that participate in the Dialogue, while embodying broadly different traditions, shared one thing in common--they each try, in their respective ways, to be good

¹ For a general survey of the nature and influence of Abelard's life and work see Etienne Gilson's Heloise and Abelard (U.S.A.: The University of Michigan Press, 1982), Leif Grane's Peter Abelard (New York: Harcourt Publishers, 1970) and Gordon Leff's Medieval Thought: St. Augustine to Ockham (Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), Chapter 5.

² Henceforth this work will be referred to as the Dialogue. The translation used is by Pierre Payer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979).

men. The philosopher, the Jew and the Christian all desire the reward of the good man, beatitude, and therefore seek to live according to the law of the good man. This aim has brought them, via the art of fiction, into the presence of their appointed judge, Abelard. ³ Thus the nature of goodness lies at the core of the work and the debate between the three characters. Abelard does not identify who among the three characters is judged by him to be truly the good man. One cannot say, from reading this text, that the goodness of the Christian nullifies the goodness of the Jew or the philosopher. This allows for the possibility that men and women can be good in various ways, or better, that Christianity need not posit a distinct separation between human nature after the Fall and human nature in a state of grace. Consequently there is no rigid separation between the ethics of the philosopher and the Christian. ⁴

Abelard's acceptance of a natural dimension to moral philosophy supports one of the main contentions of the Dialogue: the man of faith and the man of reason do not stand in opposition to one another. Natural, or civic, virtues and theological virtues are both seen as being part of the goodness of an individual. Goodness, or the virtues, as the Christian argues, admits of degrees of perfection and

³ See the 'Preface' to the Dialogue.

⁴ This extends to such a point that at several places the philosopher appears to be instructing the Christian on theology. See Abelard, op. cit., pp. 111-112 in particular.

therefore can pertain to different spheres of activity: that sphere which is governed by reason and that sphere which is governed by faith. Thus Christianity does not destroy the pagan teaching on virtues--it only adds new virtues to its teachings. ⁵ Divinity and ethics both seek the same end--God--and both seek it though the same path--virtue. The ethics of both the philosopher and the Christian can be called eudaemonistic--although this statement will be qualified below. Both are rational sciences, seeking knowledge of their subject matter; while Christianity bases itself on faith, this is illuminated by human reason. ⁶ There is not a de facto separation between moral philosophy and salvational ethics.

The difference between these two characters is their respective understanding of the precise relationship between virtue and man's final good. As the Christian says to the philosopher: "...as far as I can see, our intention [for living virtuously] as well as our merits are considerably different from yours in this matter." ⁷ The difference can

⁵ On the harmony between Christian and philosophical ethics see Kathleen M. Starnes, Peter Abelard: His Place In History (U.S.A.: University Press of America, 1981), Chapter IV and D.E. Luscombe's "The Ethics of Abelard" in Peter Abelard, ed. E.M. Buytaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974). It should be added that the dialogue is incomplete--a Christian response to the philosopher is promise, but this is never fulfilled, see p.122.

⁶ Abelard, op. cit., p.76. On Abelard's rational ethics see John Marenbon, Early Medieval Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.156-9.

⁷ Abelard, op. cit., p.97.

be explained as follows. The Christian links virtue with our final end--as does the philosopher--yet the Christian states that only the virtue of charity, in conjunction with faith and hope, can be properly called meritorious. Now if the natural virtues, including the civic virtues, are not meritorious, how can they be considered true virtues? Notice that this is the same problem posed by Augustine in Book XIX of the City of God. Abelard's Christian will pose a different solution to this problem.

As stated above, men and women can be good in different ways: according to nature and/or according to revelation. To be good according to revelation is to perform good works in relation to our final end. But to say this does not undermine the natural virtues because it is argued by the Christian that virtue does not necessarily imply meritorious actions. ⁸ Abelard's Christian presents a eudaemonistic ethics which is salvational in intent which does not exclude the natural virtues. Now this is possible because a virtue, by definition, is a strength in relation to a passion. More precisely, virtues are "bridles" on the passions which ensure that men and women are guided by prudence and faith. The cardinal virtues imply a certain type of strength in relation to the world which is ordered by human reason. Although a pagan does not perform meritorious actions, his strengths in regard to fear or cupidity are still virtues. While these qualities do

⁸ Ibid, pp.102-5.

not merit in the time of Christ, the presentation of the New Law and the sovereignty of charity does not annul the natural teaching of the pagans on the natural virtues. On the other hand, the theological virtues are strengths in relation to all that is required by Christian revelation. Thus Abelard's Christian will argue that the definition of virtue does not necessarily include reference to our final end. This is a tacit rejection of the understanding of the theo-centric definition of virtue given by Augustine.

In this chapter, Abelard's teachings on the virtues--as presented in the speeches of his three characters--will be given. The order of procedure will be as follows. In section 2.2, the major theme of the debate between the philosopher and the Jew will be given. It will be argued that the Jewish understanding of the nature of the good man is rejected because it places too much emphasis on external works commanded by the exterior principle of law as opposed to the psychological rectitude caused by natural reason and the virtues. This can be seen as the philosophical justification of eudaemonistic ethics over law. Section 2.3 will elaborate the philosopher's understanding of the function of the natural virtues in relation to the passions, the political community and our final end. This prepares the ground for the Christian's introduction of Macrobius' division of virtues. The introduction of the teachings of the Roman neo-Platonist Macrobius modifies the philosopher's moral teachings in such

a way as to allow for an understanding of virtues which are limited to performing good actions in relation to the political community.

2.2 VIRTUE AND THE WRITTEN LAW

The major discussions on virtue occur between the philosopher and the Christian; the Jew has little to say on this subject. Most of the first dialogue revolves around questions pertaining to the justification of the addition of the Written law of Moses to the natural law of the philosophers. No new virtues were brought into being by Moses, but many carnal prescriptions were. Therefore to favour the Jewish religion over the philosophic life is to value law more than virtue. The centre of tension between these two characters can be said to be an opposition between natural virtues and Jewish legalistic ethics. This can also be seen as the first part of the answer to the general question of the Dialogue, namely whether virtue and natural reason suffice to realize man's final good or whether man is in need of something else.

The major argument between the Jew and the philosopher is whether the Written Law is superfluous, or whether natural virtue--as opposed to the performance of the carnal prescriptions of the law--suffice for man's goodness. It is indicated that the Jew is willing to accept the possibility that we come to our final good only by the activity of virtue.

The Jew speaks: "True love of God and men is sufficient for every virtue of the spirit, and if works should be lacking, nonetheless, a good and perfect will would never be diminished in its merit." ⁹ A distinction is suggested by the Jew between virtue and the works commanded by the Written law.

The Jew argues that virtue and the Written law are connected in the sense that virtue leads to the willingness to obey this law. The Jew states that "We know that our people had many proselytes from the Gentiles who were converted to the Law, and this surely not so much out of imitation of their parents as out of a kindred virtue." ¹⁰ The philosopher argues that performance of the prescriptions of the law does not lead us to our final good. Reason and virtue suffice for man's rectitude. More importantly he argues that this was originally the case for the Jews. The appearance of the Law, and hence the undermining of philosophical ethics, arose due to the failure of the majority of men to acquire these virtues and to live according to the commands of their own prudence. The philosopher declares that "It is certain that before the handing on of the Law or the observance of legal sacraments most people were content with the natural law which consists in love of God and neighbour; they fostered justice and were most acceptable to God." ¹¹ Abel, Job (who is stated to

⁹ Ibid, p.58.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.53.

¹¹ Ibid, p.36.

have lived before the handing on of the law), Enoch and Noah are all cited as examples. The philosopher continues: "It is clearly gathered from this how acceptable to God was that spontaneous obedience of the earlier fathers, an obedience to which no law constrained them up to that time and a liberty in which we [philosophers] still serve him." ¹²

If nature suffices to lead us to our final end it must be asked why the Written Law was given. This is clarified by the Jew in his discussion on the necessity for the Written law as opposed to a purely natural ethical life. The Jew speaks: "For how will one be able to govern a subject people without a law if, for instance, each, abandoned to his own will, should follow his own choice? Or how will one repress their malice by justly punishing evildoers unless a law were established beforehand which forbade the evils from being done?" ¹³ Notice that the function of the Law is rooted in a communal purpose. Obedience to the Law arises from "fear." Its purpose is "repression." This is why virtue and the Law are not necessarily linked: the Written Law arises due to a general failure of virtue. The Written Law restrains malice and serves to foster religion for those who lack virtue. The Jew states that revelation was necessary for "Otherwise, it could easily have appeared that God had no concern for human affairs, and that the state of the world is run by chance rather than ruled

¹² Ibid, p.37.

¹³ Ibid, p.31.

by providence." 14

The philosopher lives by his reason alone and follows the way of life of the earliest Jews. In one of the few places where Abelard speaks for himself he says, "Yet you, O philosopher, who profess no law and submit to reasons alone...", thereby equating natural law with natural reason. 15 The philosopher has no need for the Written Law for by the discipline of virtue he possess the liberty of the upright forefathers of the Jew. The philosopher argues that "Indeed, in considering our conversation I think it has been settled that, even if you received it from God, you are able to know that I am not obliged on the authority of your Law to submit to its burden, as if something necessary were to be added to the law which Job prescribes for us by his example, or to the discipline of morals which our philosophers left to posterity in what concerns the virtues which are sufficient for beatitude." 16 Goodness arises from the principles of actions which are natural to man, reason and habit, and is not dependent on bodily gestures or the adherence to rules which

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid, p.22.

16 Ibid, p.71.

are created to control the many. ¹⁷ The philosopher's main argument against the Jew is: if one accepts virtue as the only road to God, that is, if one possesses an eudaemonistic ethics, rectitude and merit do not arise from the fear inspired performance of outward actions. To a fuller, more elaborate discussion of this understanding of moral philosophy this chapter will now turn.

2.3 THE NATURAL VIRTUES OF THE PHILOSOPHER

The philosopher has been chosen by Abelard to outline the teachings of his pagan forefathers on the natural virtues. The discussion of the cardinal virtues thus proceeds without any mention of original sin, although it is linked to an understanding of a beatitude which transcends earthly felicity as will be shown below. Civic virtues are also discussed by the philosopher and are deemed to be meritorious. The importance of the speeches of the philosopher is twofold. First, they outline the essence of the natural virtues, and secondly, as will be treated in the following section, they enable one to grasp precisely the point where Christianity seeks to quarrel with philosophy. As will be shown, this

¹⁷ See Ibid, pp.66-69. Compare pp.157-169. This section bears similarities to the statements found in Abailard's Ethics, tr. by J. Ramsay McCallum (Merrick: Richwood Publishing Co., 1975). See Etienne Gilson's History of Christian Philosophy (New York: Scribner, 1940), pp.160-162 and Armand A. Maurer's Medieval Philosophy (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), pp.68-9 for two concise summaries of Abelard's understanding.

pertains to the question of the meritorious nature of the cardinal virtues.

What is the general definition of a virtue? It is maintained that "the seat" of virtue is the mind. The philosopher, following the Christian philosopher Boethius, declares that "...Virtue...is an excellent habit of the mind...just as, on the other hand, I think vice is the worst habit of the mind." ¹⁸ Virtue is a quality which is acquired by effort, thus striving and deliberation are the efficient causes of virtue, not grace. Virtues and vices are mental habits which function in the process of deliberation in such a manner as to dispose an individual towards a certain course of action. The philosopher states that "Indeed, where there is no fight against opposition there is no crown for a conquering virtue." ¹⁹ The opposition to virtue comes from vice- understood as the urges of the flesh- and the function of virtue can be seen as "bridling" these lustful suggestions. It is from the discipline of virtue that moral actions arise for the bridle of virtue fixes the mind in its steadfast intention to act rightly according to reason in every

¹⁸ Abelard, Dialogue, p.109. This is also the definition given by Abelard in his treatise on Christian ethics, see his Ethics, p.15. That the Christian shares this view can be seen by comparing his remarks as found on pp.91-92 and pp.102-105 in the Dialogue.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.109. Notice the use of the word "against" and the opposition between virtue and the passions. Compare to Augustine treatment of the relationship between virtues and the urges of cupidity, above, and Aquinas' conception of habit, below.

circumstance.

Generally speaking virtue is a strength, and the various virtues are particular "bridles" on various passions. This can be seen from the fact that the concept "virtue" can be spoken of in two ways. ²⁰ Sometimes virtue is spoken of in the singular and sometimes it is discussed in the plural. The first way stresses the unity of the virtues. For example, one can speak of justice in the manner of Plato and Gregory the Great and say that justice cannot be realized without temperance, prudence and fortitude for the passions can lead an individual away from adhering to the path of justice. The philosopher declares that, "... because what is lost with difficulty [habit] is nonetheless sometimes compelled to recede for some great intervening cause [passion], just as this good will which is called justice sometimes dies away because of fear or cupidity, fortitude is necessary against fear, and temperance against cupidity." ²¹ Every good action draws upon the various virtues in different ways in order to realize itself. If an individual possesses all the various virtues he or she will then possesses a good will--in the sense that it firmly adheres to the rule of reason. In this case, one can simply say that virtue is present; as the philosopher states, the good will "...if strengthened into

²⁰ Ibid, pp.100-101.

²¹ Ibid, p.114.

habit can be called virtue." 22

Now to speak of the virtues is to see clearly the various individual virtues. The philosopher states that virtue can be divided into the four cardinal virtues, or more precisely the three cardinal virtues since prudence should not be considered a virtue. He explains why this is the case: "But some say that the discretion of prudence is the mother or source of the virtues rather than a virtue itself. Prudence is surely the very knowledge of morals which, as a treatise on ethics teaches [Cicero's De inventione], is the knowledge of good and evil things, which indeed are properly to be called goods or evils in themselves." 23 While Socrates argued that virtue was wisdom, Abelard's philosopher follows Aristotle by saying that wisdom does not necessarily lead to the performance of good action. In other words, prudence may command, but it cannot struggle and fight the passions. Thus the philosopher concludes that "So prudence as well as faith or hope, which are common to evil men as well as to good men, are not to be called virtues as much as they are to be said to offer a certain guidance or inducement to the virtues." 24 Now let us examine the three cardinal virtues. In keeping with the demands of a thesis in political philosophy, special emphasis will be placed on their civic functions.

22 Ibid, p.90.

23 Ibid, pp.110-1.

24 Ibid, p.112.

As the pagans were great builders of cities and empires, in both speech and deed, it is not surprising that Abelard would allow the philosopher the right to speak at length about the virtue of justice. Now the teaching on justice stresses two points: its communal setting and its connection to natural reason. Justice, as a virtue, empowers the citizen in regards to the function he or she plays within the community as a whole. The philosopher accepts the standard Classical definition of justice as "the virtue which gives every man his due while preserving the common advantage." ²⁵ This definition differs somewhat from the standard one by explicitly placing justice within a community setting implying that the end which every just action takes into account is the common good. ²⁶ Justice directs the individual to care more for public concerns and the common good than for one's own well-being. The highest example of this is given in the noble and just filicide of Aulus Fulvius. ²⁷ In fact, justice is the perfection of nature for it is stated that concern for self is the mark of a weak man, and that concern for the common well-being is the mark of a higher man. The noble qualities of the citizen are presented as being Godlike in nature. Abelard writes, "Each ought in his own small way to imitate God who, since he has no need of anything, takes no

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, Chapter IV.

²⁷ Abelard, Dialogue, p.113.

care for himself but cares for all, and ministers not to his own needs but to the needs of all. He is the governor of the whole fabric of the world as of one great republic." 28

Justice can be divided into natural right, which comes from the natural law, and positive right, which arises from the particular needs of the community. Natural right is "what reason, which is naturally in everyone and so remains permanent in all, moves us to perform, such as to worship God, to love parents, to punish evildoers...". 29 Reason asserts that murder, theft and adultery are wrong as these 'natural precepts' lie in the conscience. These latter precepts are linked to natural reason, but are also contained in the Old Law of the Jews. Natural law should be seen as what reason commands, not as legal commandments. 30 There can be no transgression of this law if the intention to serve the common good is present, for natural right is part of justice, and justice always serves the common good. This idea is seen in the discussion on positive right, or that which "is what is instituted by men to safeguard utility or uprightness more securely or to extend them, and is based on custom alone or on

28 Ibid, p.119.

29 Ibid.

30 See M. B. Crowe's, The Changing Profile of Natural Law (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), Chapter III.

written authority...". **31** The virtue of justice can be understood as a balance between historical necessity and the dictates of the conscience.

Justice can be divided into several parts. The philosopher speaks: "If I may speak briefly, the following pertain to justice which consists in conserving for each what is his: reverence, beneficence, veracity, and vindication." **32** Reverence applies to God, that is it refers to God's due, although this has a parallel in the political community in the virtue of obedience, by which inferiors follow the commands of their superiors. Clemency and generosity are divisions of beneficence and pertain to the needy and the oppressed. Truthfulness in communal projects is made possible by veracity, and vengeance--a desire natural in us all and which could undermine the benefits gained from social interaction--is subsumed in the virtue of vindication.

Two cardinal virtues remain to be discussed. Fortitude, as the philosopher states, "...is the virtue which makes us ready to undertake dangers or to endure hardships when the situation calls for it, and it particularly depends on the love of justice which we call good zeal in repelling or avenging evils." **33** The final cardinal virtue is temperance. As the philosopher explains: "Temperance is a firm

31 Abelard, Dialogue, p.120.

32 Ibid, p.116.

33 Ibid, pp.114-5.

and moderate control exercised by reason over lust and other improper impulses of the mind." ³⁴ These two virtues can also be divided into various parts pertaining to certain, specific functions which they enable their possessors to perform. From these definitions it is clear that these virtues ensure that the individual can remain true to the commands of reason, fight the inclinations of the passions (fear and cupidity) and is thereby empowered to act properly in regards to both civic and private activities.

The final point which must be stressed is the relationship between these virtues and our final good. It was made relatively clear in the section on the Jew that these virtues, according to philosophy, are meritorious. This view is confirmed by the philosopher, who states that "...the intention of living justly for the philosophers is not different from that of the Christians...For both you and we arrange to live here in justice in order to be glorified there..." ³⁵ It is made clear that the individual is made "accomplished and perfected in the good" through the cardinal virtues. ³⁶ On this point the philosopher and the

³⁴ Ibid, p.115.

³⁵ Ibid, p.97.

³⁶ Ibid, p.115. The above quoted assertion that the Godlike man cares for the wellbeing of others should be remembered. It follows from this argument that the highest type of man would be the political ruler- the all-king of Aristotle. Compare these remarks of the philosopher with the Christian's discussion of Macrobius, below. Notice that for Macrobius the virtues of contemplation are "higher" than those of political

Christian are most strongly opposed. To the question of the extent to which each and every virtue is meritorious this chapter will now turn.

2.4 VIRTUE AND THE CHRISTIAN

To begin, it must be said that the Christian agrees most strongly that a virtue implies a strength. Virtue, as such, is a habitual strength. To say that a virtue makes one strong in relation to the flesh is not to say that every virtue is also meritorious. This, briefly put, is the major correction of the Christian to what has been discussed above. This correction allows the Christian to include the natural and the theological virtues under the general heading of virtue in a way which was beyond the eudaemonistic ethics of the philosopher (or Augustine). From this position stems the Christian's acceptance of the civic virtues. Abelard's Christian has a particular understanding of the civic virtues because he possesses a belief in a hierarchy of virtues. A discussion of the idea of ranking virtues according to degrees of perfection or strength will be offered in this chapter for it serves as a clarification of the function of the natural virtues. Namely the civic virtues are not only distinguished from the meritorious virtues, but they are given in a hierarchical position within the cardinal virtues. Now these corrections to the philosopher's teaching on virtue clarifies the rectitude of virtue. In essence, the Christian will argue

action.

that men can be good in different ways and in different degrees. Goodness cannot solely be understood in terms of meritorious activity.

To begin to examine these teachings one must first know the meaning of the concept 'goodness'. It is declared by the Christian that the word 'good' can have various meanings and usages. It is pointed out by the Christian that, "We say a man is good for his morals, a worker for his knowledge, a horse for its strength or speed or whatever pertains to its usefulness. However, the meaning of 'good' varies so greatly in its adjectival use that we do not even hesitate to link it with terms for vices." ³⁷ While this concept can be used in radically different senses, and can refer to a plurality of ideas and values, goodness has a single, underlying meaning to it. The Christian states that "...I think the good in general, that is, a good thing, is said to be that which, since it is suited to some use, must not have the result of obstructing the advantage or worth of anything." ³⁸ In this teaching is presented a doctrine of goodness which can be applied to many different objects insofar as the activity of the thing in question operates in a beneficial manner. ³⁹ Notice that goodness is not specifically equated with meritorious actions. To be good is to be useful, and something can be useful in

³⁷ Ibid, p.158.

³⁸ Ibid, p.158.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.162-3.

ways which are wholly temporal. For example a horse and a worker are said to be good, yet these types of goodness do not lead to beatitude.

An individual is said to be good because of his morals, or virtues. Virtues are good qualities for they enable individuals to perform meritorious actions as well as those actions which solely pertain to a temporal purpose. Thus we can say that a citizen is good without saying that the reward of his goodness is beatitude. It was argued by the philosopher that the cardinal virtues are meritorious for through them man is 'perfected in the good.' Since the philosopher lacks revelation he commits a common error for pagans: he equates actions which are good for the city with those which are good for the soul (i.e. enables us to reach our final end). This disagreement between the Christian and the philosopher arises in the text when the philosopher suggests that "...it seemed to many philosophers that all the virtues are present at the same time in all good men, and a person in whom some virtue is lacking is not to be considered good in any respect, and for this reason there is no difference among good men either in the merits of this life or in the reward of beatitude." ⁴⁰ Here the philosopher speaks of virtue in the manner of Plato

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.100. Notice the conditional tense of this statement. Surely the philosopher was aware that strength against fear is not the same as strength against cupidity. A response to why such a position was suggested by the philosopher could be that it prepares the way for the division between charity and the cardinal virtues.

and Gregory the Great. The problem, as it applies to Christian salvational ethics, can be rephrased as whether all virtue is an expression of love of God, or if all the virtues are meritorious, or if "...charity includes all the virtues under one name..." **41**

The response given by the Christian is in direct opposition to the suggestion that virtue and goodness should be understood only in reference to salvational ethics. The Christian argues that charity is a virtue--one virtue among many--and that it co-exists with the cardinal virtues of pagan philosophy. The Christian replies, "Indeed, if virtue is understood in the proper sense as that which obtains merit with God, charity alone must be called virtue. But if it is understood as that which makes a person just or strong or temperate, it is properly called justice or fortitude or temperance." **42** Charity is the meritorious virtue according to Christianity for it is the virtue which strengthens the good will, thereby perfecting us in the performance of actions guided by faith and hope. Now it could be said that charity is open to all men to share, or that the individual who lives according to reason and the one who lives according to faith share in this same type of goodness--for even the pagans loved

41 See the Dialogue, pp. 101-103. At this point the name of Augustine is mentioned. Thus it could also be suggested that the philosopher was avoiding an outright attack on Augustine, or his followers.

42 Ibid, p.101 and p.102.

God and sought to serve him through the natural law--and were justified by their reason alone. **43** If this is the case why are not the cardinal virtues meritorious? This is not the case due to the difference between charity and prudence. **44** The Christian possesses charity as well as faith and hope--virtues of action as well as of knowledge. Charity is the virtue of the Christian for without it faith would be useless in the same manner that the commands of prudence would come to nought without the three cardinal virtues discussed above. Charity is a virtue pertaining to faith in action, and as such is lacking in the pagan. **45** The natural virtues of the philosophers allowed an individual to live by reason, the theological virtues help us to live by faith. Now in the time of Christ, only a willingness to follow his teachings suffices for beatitude. Men and women are now in need of the theological virtues to reach their final end. Thus the Christian teaching on law and virtue is the final teaching on these subjects.

Since possession of charity does not suffice for every

43 The natural law is said to consist of the two precepts of the new law- love of God and neighbour. See the Dialogue, p.36.

44 Ibid, pp. 112-113

45 Individual reason cannot be the sole guide of the mind for the life of the Christian. As Abelard writes in his Confession of Faith: "They proclaim the brilliance of my intellect but detract from the purity of Christian faith...I do not wish to be a philosopher if it means conflicting with Paul, nor to be an Aristotle if it cuts me off from Christ". This may be found in The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, tr. Betty Radice (Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd., 1974).

virtue; as such the Christian will still need the cardinal virtues in order to possess the strength necessary to perform good and useful actions according to the commands of prudence, or those activities which fall outside of the domain of charity. For example one can consider two parts of temperance: chastity, which bridles lust, and sobriety, which restrains gluttony. These natural virtues will be needed by the Christian in daily life. Fortitude is also needed by the Christian. For example one part of this virtue--humility, which tempers vanity--is certainly needed by the Christian (as Abelard quite often testifies). ⁴⁶ Being part of a political community, the Christian will also need justice and its various parts. The possession of the new law and the theological virtues do not undermine the teachings of the pagans. The Christian even admits that within the perfect discipline of morals the natural law, and hence the natural virtues, were revived and handed on to the Christian. ⁴⁷

Now as mankind can be said to be good in different ways,

⁴⁶ See Abelard, Dialogue, p.121 and his "The Story of My Misfortune" in The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, ed. Betty Radice.

⁴⁷ Abelard, Dialogue, p.80. It is a constant theme in the writing of Peter Abelard that the natural law and the law of Christian are compatible. In his Ethics, it is argued that even in the time of Christ the natural law- understood as the dictates of one's conscience- offers the foundation for meritorious actions (see p. 54 of McCallum's translation, op. cit.). Elsewhere he writes, "So great is the testimony of our conscience that this more than anything accuses or excuses us before God". See The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, ed. Betty Radice, Letter 7.

according to different virtues, a division among virtues can be made according to the degree of goodness, or strength, offered by the various virtues. The Christian states: "...if you would consider the excellent teaching of proven philosophers concerning the virtues, and attend to the careful fourfold distinction of the virtues provided by Plotinus [as restated by Macrobius], the most learned of men, that is, the distinction into: political virtues, purifying virtues, virtues of the purified mind, exemplary virtues, from their names and descriptions you are bound to admit at once that men differ greatly in virtue." ⁴⁸ By stating that virtue admits of degrees, Abelard's Christian elaborates a vision of the nature of ethical behaviour marked by an order of rank which is determined by degrees of perfection. Some individuals possess a greater degree of temperance, or justice, or fortitude than others as can be clearly seen by examining nature. As one increases one's virtues, i.e. becomes stronger in relation to the urges of the flesh, which slowly end their unruly struggle with reason, one becomes more perfect. Not all good men and women are good in the same way for some possess certain strengths and weakness. Others, a few, exhibit the virtues in their complete and fullest manifestation.

Civic virtues are the first level in Macrobius' hierarchy of virtues. As shown in the discussion on the philosopher, a certain level of self-control is needed for political life.

⁴⁸ Abelard, Dialogue, pp.104-5.

Since the civic virtues are the first stage of perfection it can be assumed that the goodness, or virtue, required to live in communities is the easiest, most attainable, degree of perfection. This is the case because civic virtues only restrain, they do not purify the soul. The citizen needs only to control the passions, he or she, unlike the monk or the philosopher, does not need to purge their souls. While the Jew thought that only fear could protect a political community from the destructive forces of hedonism, the Christian, following the philosopher, introduces the concept of civic virtue. As the civic virtues were treated most fully by the philosopher, it follows that the Christian accepts as true these teachings on the nature of political life. The civic virtues of the pagans are drawn into a Christian schema via Macrobius. With the introduction of an order of rank among the virtues, and separation of the cardinal and the meritorious virtues, Abelard's teaching on the virtues is complete.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Three points need to be stressed in order to conclude this chapter. The relationship between nature and grace must be made clear. The effect of this relationship on the association between the civic virtues and theological virtues also must be stated. And an understanding of the place of this teaching within the sweep of this thesis must be given.

As the ethical life of the Christian is open to inculcate

the natural virtues of the pagans, Christianity agrees with the philosophers that natural morality possesses an ethical worth, it merely questions the end to which it is directed. Abelard's position is based on a major assumption regarding human nature. His position could only arise once human nature was envisioned as not being completely impaired by the Fall. In the Dialogue there is a modification in the approach the Christian takes in discussing the concepts of Christian ethics. Virtue is treated as a natural quality, similar in every way to that described by Cicero and Aristotle. This extends even to the theological virtues; the role of grace is downplayed by Abelard. Abelard differs greatly with the Augustinian understanding of the relationship between virtue and grace. As J. Ramsay McCullum writes, "In the exercise of his [man's] will to act as reason prompts him to do he can unite himself to divine grace, which is thus not the sole ground of right conduct but a means of help which man may accept from God." ⁴⁹ The Fall has not undermined the ethical activity of the natural man. Even Abelard's philosopher is presented as loving God and searching for the best way to serve Him. Faith and hope only allow for the limitations of prudence to be overcome; in this sense charity allows the Christian to more fully follow the will of God than the man moved solely by the cardinal virtues. The perfection of the Christian and his ethics rests not in the unique desire

⁴⁹ See McCullum's Introduction to Abailard's Ethics, p.3.

to follow God but the strength and the scope of the virtues which arises in the "insanity" of the Christian: the surrender of the intellect to the unknowable made in a leap of rational faith. 50

The civic and theological virtues are harmonized within a complete vision of the various ethical duties of the Christian. Abelard's Christian understanding of the naturalness of virtue arises from a belief that virtue is a strength and not necessarily a meritorious quality. It belongs to the natural order and not to the order of grace. Now the Christian avoids the Jewish preoccupation with Law and the philosopher's understanding of the meritorious nature of the civic virtues. The Christian presents the civic virtues as strengths, or habitual dispositions which are not based on fear. Abelard's Christian strips the civic virtues of their direct relationship to beatitude but retains the political wisdom of the pagans. Civic virtues become wholly natural--the ends of these virtues do not include God--and are complemented by the addition of the theological virtues. 51

50 On the insanity of the Christian see the 'Preface' and the response on pp.86-87 of the Dialogue. This insanity is not as irrational as the philosopher first assumed. As the Christian declares, "Certainly, no one in his senses would forbid rational investigation and discussion of our faith, nor is there any reasonable assenting to what is doubtful before having a rational basis for doing so." See p. 86.

51 This is made clear in his Ethics, pp.40-41 and it follows logically from the general thrust of the Christian's position on the relationship between the two laws made in the early part of the dialogue.

For Christian political philosophy, this renewed acceptance of the pagan civic virtues points to a reinterpretation of the foundation of political life. There is a renewed support for an active role for natural law in the political community. This allows Christian political philosophy to present this sphere of human life in a manner divorced from the idea of original sin. What the reader encounters in the political teaching of the Dialogue is the foundation for a Christian acceptance of the idea of natural forms of perfection; the presence of Aristotle is already being felt in the Twelfth Century. To expand on this point one can say that Abelard's acceptance of the civic virtues counters the assertions of Augustine that true justice was beyond the grasp of the political sphere. One can also say that Cicero's political philosophy need not be corrected. Once one can say that Aristotle and Cicero possess part of the Truth, it follows that there is a strong possibility that natural political communities can be ordered on something other than will. So in Abelard, the reader finds the teaching on political justice intertwined with the teaching on natural law. Therefore the good pagan citizen, possessing only the morality of his city, cannot be called bad. He or she is not good absolutely, and is not as good as is the Christian, but is better than someone who lacks any type of law. 52

It might seem as though Christian political philosophy

52 Abelard, Dialogue, pp.103-104.

has reached a point where speculation about the civic virtues would be complete. Augustine and Abelard possess views of political morality which are mirror images of each other. Yet this thesis will offer one more view--that of St. Thomas--who expands upon the idea that a harmony exists between nature and grace by stressing and clarifying the roles of grace and nature in his ethical philosophy. To the Thomistic synthesis, this thesis now turns.

CHAPTER THREE--ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The third author under examination is Thomas Aquinas; his inclusion in this study is based as much upon the uniqueness of his teachings on the virtues, as upon the certainty and clarity with which it is expressed. The intellectual strength of what can be broadly called the Thomistic synthesis, or the perceived harmony between nature and grace, has influenced subsequent reflections on the relationship between the spiritual and temporal ends of human existence in such a degree as to rival the philosophy of Augustine. ¹ In short, this chapter will examine Aquinas' justification of the activity of the civic virtues in light of the influence Aristotle exerted over the Christian philosophers of the Thirteenth Century.

The material for the following exposition will be drawn from selected questions found in the treatise on virtue in the Summa Theologiae. ² These writings constitute Aquinas' final thoughts on the nature of civic life and its virtues. By

¹ For a history of the effects of Thomistic teaching on the social world see R. A. Armstrong's discussion of European natural law theorists in his Primary and Secondary Precepts in Thomistic Natural Law (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp.3-21. See generally, G.K. Chesterton, Saint Thomas Aquinas (U.S.A.: Doubleday, 1956).

² Henceforth this work will be referred to as S.T.. The translation which has been used is the Blackfriars translation (1969).

examining the mature writings of Aquinas, this chapter will explore the Aristotelian influenced philosophy of Aquinas, as opposed to earlier writings which were influenced by neo-Platonic thought to a greater degree. ³ Although Aquinas is justifiably seen as one of the greatest pupils of Aristotle, neo-Platonism, which entered Christian thought through the writings of Augustine and the enigmatic pseudo-Dionysius, was bound to occupy much of his thought due to its general influence on the Middle Ages. ⁴ It is within this play of pagan teachings that Aquinas' intellectual work must be situated. The currents of these rival streams of thought are not unfelt in the Angelic Doctor's theoretical treatment of the civic virtues in the Summa. Now both Augustine and Abelard possessed an incomplete knowledge of the works of Aristotle. For Augustine, the problem was that he knew no Greek; for Abelard the problem was that these writings had not been fully translated from the Arabic. Therefore, both men tended to favour elements of neo-Platonic ethics; Plotinus being a major influence on Augustine, while Macrobius influenced Abelard's

³ The movement from the neo-Platonism to Aristotelianism has been discussed by Michael Bertram Crowe in his The Changing Profile of the Natural Law (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977) with particular emphasis falling on the effect this movement had on Aquinas' moral philosophy. See pp. 136-141.

⁴ For example see Graciela Ritacco-Gayoso, "Intelligible Light and Love: A Note on Dionysius and Saint Thomas", The New Scholasticism, vol. LXIII, (1989): pp.156-72.

thinking, as has been seen. ⁵ Aquinas, on the other hand, had the entire corpus of Aristotle, in translation, at his disposal. In the sphere of moral philosophy this led to Aquinas' preference for an Aristotelian influenced theory of virtue as opposed to a neo-Platonic treatment of this subject.

Accordingly, Aquinas viewed the neo-Platonic division of the cardinal virtues, discussed in the previous chapter, as being problematic from an Aristotelian standpoint. The problems pertain to the idea of a hierarchy of virtues, or the relation between civic virtues and the virtues of the contemplative. Aquinas also calls into question Macrobius' division of virtue by referring to the Aristotelian notion of habit. Aquinas, following Aristotle, understands a moral virtue as a habit of a passion, and not as a strength in opposition to a passion, or as a "bridle". Now while habits can be increased or diminished, this does not imply that virtues, as habits, can be understood as being diversified according to their strength. ⁶ Thus the idea of a hierarchy of virtues, as found in Macrobius' ethics, becomes problematic. For Macrobius, the civic virtues were the lowest level in a hierarchy of virtues; they were seen as being transcended by a higher form of ethical life concerned with

⁵ On Augustine' education see Colin Starnes, Augustine's Conversion- A Guide to the Argument of "Confessions" I-IX (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), Chapter One. On the influence of Plotinus on Augustine see Robert Crouse, op. cit..

⁶ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 66, 1.

contemplation. Following Aristotle, Aquinas is not content to treat the cardinal virtues in this fashion. The discussion on the civic virtues, in the Summa, while retaining Macrobius' teachings, also presents the civic virtues in an Aristotelian schema, that is, these virtues are discussed in terms of their own worth without any reference to the objects of the theological or intellectual virtues (save prudence). The civic virtues are interpreted as moral virtues which do not extend beyond the borders of the political community; their presentation is connected to an understanding of man as a political and social animal. These corrections opens the way for an interpretation of the civic virtues which is built on an Aristotelian (as opposed to a neo-Platonic) foundation.

Aquinas' teachings on the civic virtues are unique among the three philosophers under examination because they proceed from the Aristotelian principle that man is by nature a social and political animal. ⁷ As such, civic virtues need not point beyond the order of nature to provide rectitude for human activity for nature contains ends implicit to itself. This principle provides a justification for political life based on the relatively uncorrupted nature of man, or the ethical liberty of the natural man. Thus civic morality is not seen as being part of the remedy for man's fall from grace, instead the political community and its virtues are seen as being connected to an individual's striving towards the

⁷ Ibid, 1a2ae. 61, 5.

complete fulfilment of human nature. ⁸ The liberty of the civic virtues rises from the knowledge that we have authority over certain ends of our natural existence. Once nature is presented as possessing ends which all men and women can strive for, the virtues pertaining to these ends become firm parts of any eudaemonistic ethical philosophy.

The foundation of Aquinas' acceptance of the natural virtues within a system which also includes infused moral and theological virtues was his comprehension of the relationship between the natural order, which contains natural ends, and the order of grace, or our complete beatitude in God. ⁹ Aquinas' anthropology presents human nature in a light which downplays the effect which the Fall had upon its natural movements towards objects which are of an objectively good nature. It can be seen as affirming the principle that the good is what all things seek. ¹⁰ This thesis will examine Aquinas' understanding of this principle only as it applies to political life. Nature, without the liberty of grace, can know an order of goods which are determined by the activity of our

⁸ See John Morrall, op. cit., pp. 71-74 and Mortimer J. Adler, "A Question About Law", in Essays in Thomism, ed. Robert Brennan (U.S.A.: Books For Libraries, 1972).

⁹ See Frederick Copleston, op. cit., Chapter XXXII and Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, (U.S.A.: Meriden Books, 1958), pp.122-124.

¹⁰ See, in particular, Joseph Owens, "Aquinas as an Aristotelian Commentator" and Vernon J. Bourke, "The Nicomachean Ethics and Thomas Aquinas" in St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974, Commemorative Studies, vol. 1 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974).

practical reason. The beginning of this process arises from a reflection on the content of natural law, understood as our naturalis inclinatio. There can be virtues natural to men and women because the "seeds" of natural virtues lie within us. Due to our practical reason (and will) natural virtues are possible. As Aquinas writes, "Virtue is natural to man in respect to his specific nature insofar as certain naturally known principles in regard to both thought and action are in man's reason naturally, which are like the seeds of intellectual and moral virtues..." ¹¹ As virtue is an operative habit, and as the end of every action is some type of good, man, insofar as his reason can determine the goods according to nature, can acquire natural virtues. The theological virtues, which are infused in us, pertain to an order of goods beyond our natural capability. The theological virtues reflect the limits to our nature, in the same way as the natural virtues testify to the potentialities of our nature. As such, both orders of virtues complete each other; they reflect the harmony between grace and nature. With an intellectual graciousness, Aquinas balances the two spheres of human existence without negating either.

This chapter will treat these themes in the following manner. In section 3.2, the general definition of virtue will be given. Here the harmony between Aristotelian moral philosophy and Christian salvational ethics will be outlined.

¹¹ See Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 63,1.

This will also include a discussion on the manner in which this knowledge enabled Aquinas to correct the then influential Augustinian definition of this concept. This will set the stage for a deeper examination of the ramifications of this acceptance of Aristotle in section 3.3. Here Aquinas' discussion of Macrobius and Aristotle, on the topic of the diversification, or division, of the virtues will be given. The problem with Macrobius' conception of a hierarchy of virtues in regards to the relationship between the life of the philosopher and the life of the citizen will be stressed.

3.2 VIRTUE IN GENERAL

In this section the general definition of virtue, as given in the Summa, will be examined. The principal text in question is Part 1a2ae. Question 55, with special attention being paid to Article 4. Briefly put, moral virtues can be considered as habits leading to good operations since these disposition imply the perfecting of the human psyche in relation to choosing objects of desire. This understanding of virtue can be seen in the definition--popular in the Medieval schools--which stated that virtue was "a good quality of the mind, by which we live rightly, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us without us." ¹² This definition, while stressing virtue's rational nature, places equal emphasis upon God's role in its operation. It is a

¹² Ibid, 1a2ae. 55,4.

particularly Christian understanding of virtue for this reason. Aquinas states that this definition has been garnered from the works of Augustine, namely his De libero arbitrio, although it has been suggested that this definition could be better ascribed to the twelfth century schoolman, and Augustinian, Peter Lombard.¹³ In any case it is not an Aristotelian definition. Now this definition is cited by Aquinas to be a proper definition of virtue in Question 55,4, but not without several important modifications. The correction of this definition enables Aquinas to harmonize the natural and infused virtues. What follows is a discussion of Aquinas' Aristotelian correction of the Augustinian definition of virtue.

Aquinas divided his discussion of this definition according to the four causes of Aristotelian science. He began his correction from the perspective of the formal cause of virtue. This cause is located in the phrase "good quality". Both virtue and vice can be seen as being a certain type of quality; the difference between them lies in the fact that virtue is a good quality, or as Aquinas prefers, virtue is a good habit. By saying that virtue is a habit, and not a quality, Aquinas makes his first correction of the above definition. Why would Aquinas replace quality with habit? Earlier in the treatise he had agreed that virtue was a

¹³ See John A. Oesterle's translation of the Treatise on the Virtues, p.54, footnote 30. Oesterle suggests that the source of this definition is Lombard's Sentences II, d.27, 5.

quality, and that habits were a distinct species of quality. ¹⁴ This correction reflects more than a desire to specify the precise kind of quality to which habit belongs.

The use of the word habit is Aristotelian and it implies all that Aristotle said on habits in his Categories, a major source for Aquinas' discussion of habit and quality. Now habit, as Aristotle understood the term, differs from the way in which some Medieval thinkers, who were influenced by neo-Platonic philosophy, conceived of this term. Abelard can be taken as an example. Abelard said that virtue was a habit, but he saw virtue as, metaphorically speaking, a bridle to the passions. In order to "bridle" a passion, a virtue must, in a certain sense, be "outside" of the passion. Now in the Aristotelian tradition a virtue is, as Aquinas writes, "...a determinate perfection of a power." ¹⁵ That is, a virtue is a habit of power, or passion, not outside of the power. By saying that virtue is a habit, Aquinas is implying that a virtue is a perfection of a power, as opposed to a bridle. The replacement of the word quality for habit serves the purpose of clearly delineating moral virtue's relationship to a certain conception of habit.

The importance of this difference, in relation to the formal cause of virtue, becomes more apparent when the difference between vice and virtue is considered. What does

¹⁴ See Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 49, 1-2.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1a2ae. 55,1.

Aquinas mean by saying that virtue is a "good" habit? Aquinas explains that "Virtue is the goodness of man, for virtue is that which makes its possessor good." ¹⁶ A thing can be said to be good if it realizes its proper form or if it is brought to its perfection. For example, the perfection of an individual's passions, or irrational soul, is its willingness to be led by the command of prudence, or the rational soul. ¹⁷ The intellectual virtues also arise from rational habits perfecting reason's movement towards grasping the truth. ¹⁸ When a firm and steady disposition to follow the commands of reason arises within an individual one can say that this individual is now good for he or she has realized their telos, or perfection. Thus a moral virtue is a good habit because it is the steady and firm ability of a passion to adhere to the rule of reason. As is clear from the above discussion, this understanding of goodness would be problematic if a moral virtue was seen as being outside of the passion. This is why Aquinas prefers to say habit, instead of quality.

The next part of the definition which will be considered is the material cause of virtue, or the subject of virtue, which is specified in the phrase "of the mind." At this point another problem arises with this Augustinian definition. This

¹⁶ Ibid, 1a2ae. 55,4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 1a2ae. 61,4.

definition states that virtue is a quality of the mind, or that virtue is a rational entity. In saying this one must consider what was discussed above, namely the nature of the moral virtues. In this case, Aquinas does not correct the definition, instead he stresses the rational and irrational nature of habits. Aquinas writes that "Virtue can be in the irrational part of the soul only insofar as this participates in reason." ¹⁹ While the passions can possess habits, this habit conforms the passion to the rule of prudence. This relationship, as Aristotle had said, is political for there is a willingness on the part of the passions to follow the commands of prudence. ²⁰ The image of a bridle--which is closely related to that of a whip--indicates more of a relationship between master and slave. It is made clear that virtues are guided by reason, but not all virtues are of the mind, that is the practical and speculative intellect.

As virtue is about good activity, its final cause lies in its rightness, or rectitude, as indicated in that part of the definition which reads: "by which we live rightly, of which no one can make bad use." As the moral virtues denotes a right order between passion and reason, these habits also indicate a right choice in our activities. As Aquinas writes, "...indeed an act of virtue is nothing other than free choice

¹⁹ Ibid, 1a2ae. 55, 4. See objection 3 and its reply.

²⁰ Ibid, 1a2ae. 56, 4.

well applied." ²¹ Virtue is an operative habit because it is concerned with good activity. Since action is always for an end, and an end can be called good or evil, every action is a moral act. Virtue is ultimately about choosing the right ends and ensuring that one is able to pursue these ends in the right manner. Now Aquinas writes, "The rightness which means order to a due end and to the divine law, which is the rule for the human will, is, however, common to all virtues, as was stated above." ²² Aquinas refers the reader, in the above quotation, back to an earlier part of the Summa, where he writes, "...the light of reason within us can show us what is fair and can guide us in so far as it reflects the light of God's countenance (the Eternal law)...and where human reason fails us we should have recourse to the divine reason." ²³ As virtue is about choosing and obtaining the right ends for human life, the measure which guides the virtues cannot be an autonomous judgement of reason since we are not the source of

²¹ Ibid, 1a2ae. 55, 1.

²² Ibid. See also Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy (New York: Scribner, 1940), p.329 for a discussion of the difference between natural and divine infusion of the principles of practical reasoning.

²³ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 19,5. The reference to this particular text is confirmed by both the W. D.Hughes and the Oesterle translation. Aquinas explicitly states that natural law is part of divine reason in S.T., 1a2ae, 91, 3.

our own righteousness. ²⁴ The virtues enable us to live rightly because the order of right reason is realized in our operation by these various habits. As such, Aquinas has no disagreement with the author of the definition--but it will be noticed that Aquinas suggests in passing that natural reason is able to act on its own in reference to ethical matters. Now this statement raises a question pertaining to the efficient cause of virtue.

Aquinas maintains that virtue is brought into being by two efficient causes; virtues can either be caused by the unaided efforts of individuals or infused in man by God. This assertion can be seen as being another correction of this Augustinian definition. The phrase which is now under scrutiny is "which God works in us without us." This phrase states that there is only one efficient cause of virtue. It is at this point that the disagreement between the pagans and the Augustinians in the sphere of moral philosophy becomes apparent for it is obvious that God was not the cause the Platonic or Aristotelian virtues. In settling this disagreement, Aquinas answers that nagging problem which Tertullian so bluntly asked as it pertains to ethics. To state briefly the way in which Aquinas balanced the theories of

²⁴ For another interpretation of the relationship between ends and laws in Aquinas see E.A. Goerner, "On Thomistic Natural Law- The Bad Man's View of Thomistic Natural Law", Political Theory, Vol. 7 no.1, February (1979): pp.393-418 and his "Thomistic Natural Right- The Good Man's View", Political Theory, Vol. 11 no. 3, August (1983): pp.275-285.

these two schools, it can be said that he argued that individuals can acquire the natural virtues--those which pertain to the goods of nature--without any direct aid from God, but that this did not hold for the theological virtues, which required direct aid since they pertained to a good above nature. Aquinas, unlike Augustine, allows for two efficient causes of virtue, and thus posits a concord between the natural, or civic, virtues and the theological virtues.

Correcting Augustine on this point, Aquinas writes that, "The efficient cause of infused virtue, which is the virtue defined here, is God...If this last part of the definition is omitted, the rest of it is common to all virtue, both acquired and infused." ²⁵ The above definition of virtue can be seen as referring to those virtues introduced by Christianity by which we merit a supernatural happiness and which, as the definition declares, are given to us by God. Now it is also maintained that there are virtues which arise according to natural principles. Our will, which naturally seeks the good as determined by reason, and those principles which guide practical activity, are the efficient causes of natural virtues. ²⁶ In maintaining that nature is an efficient cause of the virtues, Aquinas affirms the liberty and ethical worth of human nature after the Fall. Free choice is a real and existent activity which man possesses due to his nature,

²⁵ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 55,4.

²⁶ Ibid, 1a2ae. Question 63 in general.

and not due to the restoration of grace.

Since the final end of man cannot be found in the natural order, God must be the efficient cause of those virtues which lead us to this end. ²⁷ Although reason and will are the principles of the natural virtues, these principles are flawed in terms of our final end. In correcting these flaws, or the effects of the Fall upon our nature, it can be said that God is one of the efficient causes of virtue in two ways. First by grace God infuses certain principles into human reason by which men and women may seek beatitude. Aquinas writes, "The power of the principles naturally in us does not extend beyond the capacity of nature. Consequently, in relation to a supernatural end, man needs to be perfected by other principles in addition to these." ²⁸ The second manner in which God can be seen as an efficient cause of virtue lies in the transformation of the will. As the good of reason is transformed by the infusion of certain virtues in the intellect, so to the nature of the will is transformed in order to desire this good. This is accomplished by the virtues of charity and hope. ²⁹ For these reasons Aquinas writes that "Infused virtue is caused in us by God without action on

²⁷ Ibid, 1a2ae. 62,3.

²⁸ Ibid. See Peter Lumberras, "Notes on the Connection of the Virtues", The Thomist, Vol.XI, No.2, April (1948):pp.271-40 and generally Oscar Brown's Natural Rectitude and Divine Law In Aquinas (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981).

²⁹ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 62,3.

our part, but not without our consent", or solely in relation to beatitude can it be said that this part of the definition is correct.

From Aquinas' discussion on the general nature of virtue it can be concluded that a harmony exists between the virtues of nature and grace. The truths of revelation have not destroyed the precepts of the natural law nor has the ability of the natural man to place his passions under the rule of reason been thoroughly subverted by the effects of original sin. The firm conviction that virtue may be acquired and directed towards natural goods can be seen as the foundation of Aquinas' positive view of the civic virtues. Now that virtue in general has been discussed, the manner in which the various individual virtues, including the civic virtues, arise will be examined.

3.3 THE DIVISIONS OF VIRTUE

The idea of a hierarchy of virtues has already been treated in the chapter on Abelard. It was Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio which served as the main source for Abelard's and Aquinas' understanding of this element of neo-Platonic moral theory. This is not surprising since Macrobius' commentary was among the handful of major

works of neo-Platonism available to the Medievals. ³⁰ One can argue that part of the influence of Macrobius was due to the fact that the recovery of the complete corpus of Aristotle's works did not occur till the thirteenth century. This could also explain why some of the earliest followers of Aristotle, such as Abelard, saw no contradiction in combining diverse elements of these two philosophies. Now Aquinas, benefitting from the achievements of the renaissance of the Twelfth century, possessed both an understanding of the neo-Platonic theory of virtue and the Ethics and Politics of Aristotle. ³¹ As such he was in a position to see clearly the differences between these two pagan philosophers. Keeping in mind that Aquinas generally regarded the teaching of "the Philosopher" as being superior, the discussion of Macrobius' divisions of the cardinal virtues in Part 1a2ae. Question 61, 5 of the Summa can be seen as Aquinas' interpretation (or correction) of this teaching in light of the principles he accepted from Aristotle. As W. D. Hughes suggests, "This article breaks out of the framework of the Nicomachean Ethics, and serves as an introduction to the following Question on the

³⁰ See Marenbon, op.cit., pp.10-11 and generally Friedrich Heer's The Medieval World (U.S.A.: New American Library, 1961). The other major source of pagan neo-Platonism was Calcidius' commentary on Plato's Timaeus.

³¹ See Thomas S. Hibbes, "Principles and Prudence: The Aristotelianism of Thomas's Account of Moral Knowledge", New Scholasticism, (1987): p.271-284 for a discussion of the influence of Aristotle on Aquinas' ethics.

theological virtues which go to what is 'out of this world'." ³² A close reading of this article reveals that Aquinas sees Macrobius' account of the virtues as being problematic, and in need of modification, from an Aristotelian viewpoint.

This section will examine Aquinas' correction of Macrobius' division of the virtues because this article highlights two major elements of Aquinas' own teachings on the virtues. The first pertains to the relationship between the moral virtues and the passions. Since moral virtues are habits of the passions one can question the possibility of the existence of purified or purifying virtues. The second reason why Aquinas' treatment of Macrobius is being presented is that it prepares the way for an Aristotelian understanding of the diversification of the virtues. This is important, in regards to this thesis, because Aristotle's treatment of the civic virtues differs greatly from that given by Macrobius. As the above quotation from Hughes suggests, Aquinas follows Aristotle in diversifying the moral virtues in a non-hierarchical fashion according to the distinctive differences in the objects of various powers. ³³ As Aristotle did not

³² See his translation of the S.T., vol. 23, Blackfriars 1969, p.128.

³³ Both Aristotle and Aquinas say that some virtues are "higher" than others, in the sense that the powers of our rational soul are more noble than those of our irrational soul. Of course the theological virtues are better than the natural virtues because of their end. Yet this is not to say that the intellectual virtues arise out of a increased

posit a hierarchy of virtues, the civic virtues were not to be seen as being a first stage of goodness; instead, for both Aristotle and Aquinas, the civic virtues were presented as an integral part of one's perfection.

To begin, this chapter will offer a brief discussion of the difficulties Aquinas had with Macrobius' theory. The first division of virtue within this system is that of the exemplary virtues. It is argued that as the form, or pattern, of all things pre-exist in God's mind, the form of all human virtues must pre-exist in God. This division is based on the neo-Platonic understanding of Forms. As such it is bound to conflict with an Aristotelian understanding of the forms of things as being implicit within the activity of their nature. As human virtues are known from observing human things, and not eternal things, it is problematic to say that virtues can find a pattern in the activity of God. As Aquinas writes, "Aristotle, however, says that it is absurd to ascribe justice, courage, temperance and prudence to God." ³⁴ Now Aquinas does not say that the Form of these virtues are found in God--instead he says that human and exemplary virtues are linked by way of an analogy, or according to similarities. The functions of cardinal virtues are modified in order to give them a role within the activity of God. Aquinas writes, "Thus

strength of the moral virtues. While some virtues may be more important, they do not negate the existence or the value of the lower virtues. See S.T., 1a2ae. 66, 1.

³⁴ Ibid, 1a2ae. 61, 5. See Objection 1.

the divine mind itself may be called prudence; while God's temperance may be seen as his self-containment, somewhat as in us by temperance our reason holds our desires. His courage is his changelessness; his justice the observance of the Eternal Law in his works, as Plotinus writes." ³⁵ By arguing that God's activity, by analogy, admits of comparison with human life, Aquinas presents God as being an ultimate role model. This division of virtue serves the same type of purpose in moral education as does hagiography. In a sense, Macrobius' understanding of exemplary virtues overcomes a possible defect within Aristotle's system. For Aristotle, in order to become wise and virtuous, we must perform the acts of wise and virtuous men. Yet while these men are not always within our sight, God cannot be taken away from us. ³⁶ As such, to comprehend the virtues of God is to see the exemplification of human virtues. Thus Aquinas presents this division of virtue as a statement on the nature of God which, in a certain fashion, can be of use to moral philosophy.

Aquinas' major corrections of Macrobius occurs in his discussions of those virtues which are possessed by humans: the first three divisions of the cardinal virtues. It will be useful to examine the middle two divisions of virtues--the purifying and the purified virtues--at the same time for they

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. See also Aristotle, op. cit., Book I, Chapter 8 in particular.

can be seen as being problematic for the same reason. The third highest division of the cardinal virtues are referred to as the virtues of a purified or cleansed spirit. Aquinas writes that at this level "...prudence now sees only divine things, temperance knows no earthly desires, fortitude is oblivious to the passions, and justice is united with the divine mind by an everlasting bond..." 37 The second division contains the qualities which are known as the purifying, or cleansing virtues. Here, Aquinas writes, "...prudence, by contemplating divine things, counts all worldly things as nothing; temperance puts aside the customary needs of the body so far as nature permits; fortitude prevents the soul from being afraid of withdrawing from bodily needs and rising to heavenly things..." 38 These virtues arise because, as Aquinas writes, "...there should be virtues between the political virtues, which are human virtues, and the exemplar virtues, which are divine." 39 Now Aquinas states that human virtues, or the civic virtues, are about passions. These are about the passions in the sense that they are concerned with right appetite, taste, or natural law. The virtues now under examination are not about passions for they are about God or contemplation. They are the virtues of the philosopher, not the citizen, per se. As Macrobius was a pagan

37 Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 61, 5.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

he lacked any knowledge of theological virtues, or infused moral virtues. Accordingly these two divisions of virtues can be referred to as "philosophic" virtues because they deal with contemplation. Thus when Macrobius states that by these virtues we are made like God, this must be understood philosophically, or as referring to the strengthening of the divine activity.

These "philosophic" divisions of virtues are problematic due to the relationship between the virtues and the passions. To repeat: While some philosophers, like Abelard, saw the moral virtues as being opposed to the passions, Aristotle saw virtues as being the habits of various passions. Thus Abelard's usage of Macrobius might not cause any contradiction in his theory, but from an Aristotelian perspective the idea of a "purified" virtue is problematic. As Aquinas writes, "Macrobius says that 'in a spirit that is purified, temperance does not have to check earthly desires, but forgets them completely; for courage passions are not to be overcome, they are unfelt.' Yet it was stated above, that the virtues mentioned cannot exist without passions." ⁴⁰ It is impossible, from the point of view of moral psychology, to talk of virtues operating in an individual who has been "purified" of the passions. On this issue Aquinas corrects Macrobius by arguing that "One might say that he [Macrobius]

⁴⁰ Ibid.

is speaking of passions as denoting inordinate motions." 41 By speaking of "inordinate motions", as opposed to passions being "unfelt" or "forgotten", Aquinas interprets Macrobius as referring to the process of acquiring habits as opposed to any process of "purification". By "inordinate" Aquinas means that the passion is not yet "politically" guided by reason, or that the habit has not yet taken root. Aquinas avoids any suggestion that the process of acquiring a virtue entails some form of "purging." This correction reaffirms the teaching that moral virtues are habits of the passions.

Now in saying this, it should not be assumed that Aquinas does not think habits admit of "degrees" of strength. As he writes, "...one man is better disposed than another, either because the habit is more developed in him, or because of a better natural disposition or a more discerning judgement of reason; or, finally, because of a greater gift of grace..." 42 Some habits are more fully rooted than others. But notice that the word which is used is "developed", not "division." Within an Aristotelian schema there is a movement from vice to virtue, and habits can be understood as differing in strength accordingly. This difference in development does not constitute a division of habits in a hierarchical relationship based on strength. Macrobius' division of the virtues is foreign, in this sense, to the Aristotelian

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid, 1a2ae. 66, 1 and 3.

understanding of habit.

Again, it must be added that although Aristotle does not state that there is a hierarchy of virtues, common sense tells us that some men perform actions which might indicate that their moral virtues are "stronger" than those of other men. As Aquinas writes one could ascribe the purified virtues to those "who are at the summit of perfection". ⁴³ Now this can also be explained by reference to Aristotelian theory. Aquinas writes that virtues observe a mean of reason in their actions. ⁴⁴ This mean is relative to the individual in question, that is men and women are ordered, in different ways, to objects of desire. For example, the temperance of a monk would be "greater" than that of a prince. The bravery of a soldier would be "greater" than that of a philosopher. ⁴⁵ As such, men and women do differ in the "strength" of their virtue in relation to the goods of the passions, but only according to the mean. Viewed in this light, Macrobius and Aristotle are describing the same phenomenon, but in different philosophical frameworks. Of course, the benefits of using Aristotle's system is that it is much clearer on the precise

⁴³ Ibid, 1a2ae. 61, 5.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1a2ae. 64, 1.

⁴⁵ What is being referred to here--and in Macrobius' division--is the idea of the philosopher as ascetic, i.e. as one who lives by a stricter mean. Socrates, Seneca and St. Jerome would be example of this type of philosophic life. On the influence of this understanding of the philosopher during the Middle Ages see generally Etienne Gilson's Heloise and Abelard.

relationship between habits and passions, and does so without reference to a hierarchy.

The idea of a hierarchy of virtues can be seen as being problematic because of its tendency to regard the civic virtues, the lowest among the four divisions, as being inferior to the other "higher" virtues. As will be shown below, Aquinas prefers to understand these virtues according to Aristotle's diversification of the virtues: Aquinas will argue that the civic virtues are not "transcended" by another level of natural virtues. As such, Aquinas corrects Macrobius' presentation of the civic virtues as being the first "rung" on an ascent to total perfection. For Aquinas, the civic virtues are needed by every citizen for they are a part of the perfection of every man qua political animal. ⁴⁶ As civic life is part of the perfection of our nature, the virtues pertaining to this life must be a "concrete" part of any ethics. ⁴⁷ In other words, Macrobius' hierarchy tends to view political activity as being inferior to contemplation, or

⁴⁶ The idea of man being both a social and a political animals is derived from the greek term, zoon politikon, which is rendered by Aquinas as having the above twofold meaning. See W. D. Hughes' translation of the Question 61, 5 in the Blackfriars edition. On the political consequences see the Introduction to Thomas Gilby's The Political Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

⁴⁷ See Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 94,2. Aquinas writes, "...there is in man an inclination to good according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him; thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God and to live in society.....". It is in this way that man is by nature a political animal.

it views the morality of the political community as being "second-best" to the life of contemplation. Now this question, as approached from the level of nature, explores the relationship between the philosophic and the civic life. Aquinas does not solely refer to "leisure"; he discusses a holy leisure. This type of life was first encountered in the chapter on Augustine. By referring to a "holy" leisure, one can conclude that what Aquinas says about the relationship between the civic virtues and the philosophic virtues extends to the theological virtues as well.

Aquinas, following Aristotle's teleological interpretation of human nature, corrects Macrobius on this point. This is seen in a "debate" between Aquinas and Macrobius on the relation between the contemplative and the political life. For Macrobius, the higher levels of virtue ordered an individual towards the life of contemplation, not action. Thus the purifying or purified virtues entail a "flight" away from the world. ⁴⁸ The idea of removing oneself from the life of the community, commonly shared by the Platonists, is rejected by St. Thomas. It is wrong to ignore human affairs because political communities are necessary in order for men to live the good life. ⁴⁹ Accordingly every individual is in need of the civic virtues for, as Aquinas

⁴⁸ Ibid. See Objection 3 and its reply.

⁴⁹ See Aquinas, On Kingship (Westport: Hyperion, press, Inc., 1979), Book 1 for a more detailed discussion on the relationship between the good life and politics.

writes, "...man comports himself rightly in human affairs by these virtues." ⁵⁰ It is obvious that the life of contemplation differs from the civic life, and Aquinas understood that the individual who followed such a life paid little heed to the pressing demands of the political communities in which he or she lived. In the all consuming quest to understand the world, one does not have the time to govern it. Aquinas presents a healthy compromise between these two forms of life, which represent two elements of the totality of human perfection. ⁵¹ One must balance both of these concerns: "To neglect human affairs when they require attending to is wrong; otherwise it is virtuous." ⁵² Our leisure must be properly spent in search of wisdom, but this task does not override our duties to others. The intellectual virtues do not replace the civic virtues.

Now it is one thing to say that the civic virtues are necessary, it is another to demonstrate how they are related to virtue in general. As the modification of Macrobius' system was based on principles taken from Aristotle it follows that Aquinas should support Aristotle's diversification of the

⁵⁰ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 61, 5.

⁵¹ On the Thomistic understanding of perfection see Anthony J. Celano, "The Concept of Worldly Beatitude in the Writings of Thomas Aquinas", Journal of the History of Philosophy, 25:2 April (1987): pp.215-26 and Beatriz Bosci de Kirchner, "Aquinas as an Interpreter of Aristotle on the End of Human Life", Review of Metaphysics, September (1986): pp.41-54.

⁵² Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 61, 5. See Objection 4 and its reply.

virtues. In this system the civic virtues are treated as moral virtues which pertain to social life; they remain on the same "level" as the remaining cardinal virtues, and are not treated as a lowest division. Aquinas treats this topic in Part 1a2ae. Question 60, 5. According to this system it can be said that there are eleven moral virtues. They are: fortitude, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, philotimia, gentleness, friendliness, truthfulness, well-bred insolence and justice. These are the moral virtues of Aristotle, and to these virtues Aquinas adds chastity and abstinence.

Aquinas states that the moral virtues are distinguished according to either the manner in which the good in question is apprehended, or according to sphere of human life to which the good pertains. Thus fortitude arises in relation to goods perceived by the irascible power and temperance pertains to goods which are the objects of the concupiscible power. Now it is the second way in which the moral virtues can be differentiated which produces the civic virtues for an Aristotelian. It is stated that "...man's good...may be to ordered to the good of man himself, whether of body or soul, or ordered to the good of man in his relationship with others. Every such diversity, because of a different ordering to reason, differentiates virtues." ⁵³ Thus some moral virtues belong solely to the private sphere of life, such as chastity, while others pertain solely to communal life.

⁵³ Ibid.

Those virtues which deal solely with social life are three in number. They are friendliness, truthfulness and well-bred insolence. (Justice is not included in this list as Aquinas, in the question under examination, is concerned solely about the moral virtues concerned with the passions, and justice is a virtue of the will.) The virtues of friendliness and truthfulness arise from the pleasure derived from serious matters, while well-bred insolence refers to a pleasurable good which arises in playful leisure. ⁵⁴ These can be seen as moral virtues because they deal with the pleasure taken in social intercourse. Now embedded as humans are within a social context it is impossible to name any natural sphere of activity which does not have potential political consequences. To the extent that one exists within a community, one can be considered as a part within a whole. Thus the remaining moral virtues, which can pertain to private goods, can be directed to social ends as well. For example, a virtue such as fortitude need not be solely concerned with social relations. It can apply equally to warfare and any "private" life threatening situation. Thus all the virtues named above can be called civic virtues because, as Aquinas writes, "...we are speaking of them here, not only to function well in regards to the community, but also in regards to the parts of the community, namely the home or an individual

⁵⁴ Ibid. See also his Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), VIII.L.IX:C1657-1671.

person." ⁵⁵ In this sense, every moral virtue can also be seen as being concerned with our relationship with each other, or with the community in general. ⁵⁶

By viewing the civic virtues as being part of the natural perfection of human life, Aquinas conceives of political activity as possessing an inherent dignity and worth. ⁵⁷ Aquinas tempers the intellectual elitist view of the neo-Platonists which stated that the theoretical life transcended the practical life of the citizen. One can always question the relationship between civic life and "higher" forms of being, i.e. the philosophic or religious life. Aquinas makes it clear that in turning to God, one should not ignore one's neighbours. The influence of the naturalism of Aristotle can be seen as liberating the civic virtues from their previous connection to a neo-Platonic ascent to a supernatural good. Aquinas' humanistic political philosophy is thus heavily indebted to the Aristotelian concepts which enabled him to correct the political-theology of Macrobius.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This exposition of Aquinas' teaching on the virtues argued that ethical life admits of many spheres of virtues,

⁵⁵ Aquinas, S.T. 1a2ae. 61, 5.

⁵⁶ The virtue which directs us to serve the common good is legal justice.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 61, 5. See also Thomas Gilby's "Appendix 8", S.T., Vol. 28.

each sphere being governed by its own principles, although finally connected with each the others by their final cause: the divine wisdom which moves all things to their end. As ethical life can be divided into spheres, the goods of life be divided into orders. Broadly speaking these orders are two in number: nature and grace. Now as stated above one of the underlying principles of Aquinas' treatment of virtue is the Classical principle that good is the end which all things seek by nature, or that man's ability to seek an order of goods through the natural virtues was not destroyed by the Fall. ⁵⁸ The teachings of the pagan philosophers are true insofar as natural reason is able to judge according to the senses and the precepts of natural law.

The theological and civic virtues had been harmonized by interpreting their function within an overarching compatibility between the ends of the natural order and the order of grace. The uniqueness of Aquinas' teaching on the civic virtues, which pertains to the goods of the political order, is due to this synthesis between grace and nature. While all three of the philosophers discussed in this paper maintained that we have a supernatural end, not all argued that we have a natural end as well, or that we are in need of

⁵⁸ See Aquinas, S.T. 1a2ae. 94,2.

an earthly and a supernatural perfection.⁵⁹ Only Aquinas argued that this was indeed the case. Now in order to state this, one must have a theory of human nature which posits natural ends as part of its essence. Aquinas stated that nature contains such ends, and that human reason could naturally grasp their essence. He also said that political life was one of these ends. By embracing Aristotle's statement that we are by nature a social and political animal, and by presenting nature as possessing a rectitude in relation to conatural ends, Aquinas was able to say that the civic virtues were a part of the totality of human perfection, and remain so even after the Fall. Thus civic life and spiritual life are two dimensions of the complete human personality.

The Christian, in Aquinas' political philosophy, is not viewed as a "pilgrim" within the community. Even though the end of the theological virtues surpass in dignity and beauty any good which is gained naturally, these virtues do not undermine the objective value of any good, or their accompanying virtues, known through the activity of natural

⁵⁹ Of course the natural virtues are incomplete in relation to our final end. As Etienne Gilson writes, "It is impossible...from a truly Thomistic point of view, to imagine a natural morality without binding it to that spiritual life the perfection of which is the perfection of that morality. Those who would attempt such a study should be on their guard against the fundamental error of considering each moral virtue to be crowned with a theological double whose function is to do the same thing in a better way. The natural virtues remain what they were; it is the one who possesses them who has changed." See his The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas (New York: Octagon Books, 1983), p.347.

reason. ⁶⁰ Aquinas was the first of the three authors under examination to contemplate the civic virtues in terms of the perfection they brought to man as a social and political animal. In doing so he divorced our understanding of these virtues from those virtues which related an individual to God: the theological and infused moral virtues. To put it briefly, Aquinas treated the civic virtues as an inherent part of the natural order. Good citizenship need not be based on grace, and although the spiritual and the political should not be viewed in isolation from each other, political life was seen as possessing a rational liberty. ⁶¹ The virtue-based political philosophy of Aquinas brings into being the conception of a form of ethical life which all men, regardless of their faith, can share.

⁶⁰ See Walter Ullmann's op. cit., Chapters 4-7 and Paul Sigmond's "Thomistic Natural Law and Social Theory", Calgary Aquinas Studies, ed. A. J. Parel (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974).

⁶¹ On the relationship between Church and State see Aquinas, S.T., 2-2. 60, 6. For a discussion of the relationship between liberty, reason and morality see Douglas Flippen, "Natural Law and Natural Inclination", New Scholasticism, Vol. LX (1986): pp.287-316.

CONCLUSION

The arguments presented in this thesis are part of a continuous debate on whether the virtues of the natural order possess a rectitude in light of the teachings of Christian revelation concerning the state of man's psyche and its final end. The question which Christianity posed to political philosophy was whether its virtues could be called true virtues when compared with those meritorious qualities of a salvational ethics. The centre of this discussion revolved on the disparity between the spiritual end of the theological virtues and the secular, temporal sphere to which the civic virtues belong. It was the introduction of a salvational ethics--and all that it presupposes--which provided the starting point for a metamorphosis of virtue-based political philosophy as found in the Classical thinkers. The political problem, par excellence, for Christian thinkers was the ends of political activity, or the goods of the natural order became problematic when human nature (both rational and appetitive) was deemed to be, in some manner, corrupted. While pagans could make a distinction between virtues and vice according to a separation between the life of men and brutes, the nerve of any Christian treatment of this problem was no longer located in the discrepancy between wisdom and pleasure. It was located in the difference between fallen and restored nature, or the natural order and the order of grace, as

Augustine pointed out in the City of God.

In this thesis a development of thought can be seen from Augustine to Abelard to Aquinas in the way in which the relationship between the virtues of these two orders is regarded. As has been shown, each of these thinkers based their understanding of the civic virtues on their perception of the extent to which the primeval impairment of human nature affected the rectitude of natural morality. Accordingly, this thesis traced the growing concord between philosophy and theology in the spheres of ethics and anthropology. For Augustine, the political community could not realize a right order, or true justice, due to the moral floundering of unaided human nature. Nature was presented as a realm of cupidity where disordered passions lead individuals to turn upside down their proper relationship with God, their fellow citizens and the goods of human life. No possibility was entertained that the natural order was sufficient in its own internal processes to offer an individual a level of rectitude. The civic virtues, as part of the natural order, were deemed to be drastically tainted by the Fall.

Abelard's view of human nature differed from that of Augustine by maintaining that humankind could naturally acquire virtues and that the moral philosophies of the pagans were not to be rejected as being false. Christian revelation was perceived as being the perfection of these teachings, not the proof of the errors of natural reason. The cardinal

virtues are compatible with a salvational ethics insofar as these qualities enabled their possessors to control the various passions which threatened to undermine the rule of reason. The concept of virtue was partly separated from salvational ethics for an individual was seen to be able to produce a rational rectitude of the human psyche. By viewing the natural virtues in this favourable light, Abelard's Christian was able to present the civic virtues as possessing a rectitude independent of the final good of man. Reason can inform the political community, thus implying that it is not merely a realm of cupidity. The Christian can embrace the civic virtues because everyone--pagan, Jew or Christian--shares in the laws of the mind. Abelard's stressing of the naturalness of ethical activity is the beginning of the movement away from the grace centred theories of Augustine.

In the chapter on Thomas Aquinas, a position which combines a natural and a supernatural perfection is encountered. Here the reader finds a position which balances the virtues of nature and those of grace, and which presents human nature complete with its liberty and its limitations. It is argued that human affective activity, when placed under the guidance of practical reason, directs us to natural

goods.¹ There is a rational liberty implicit in human nature which extends to goods pertaining to this level of existence. This freedom is made apparent in the ethical worth of the political community and its virtues in relation to the natural perfection of human nature. As with the philosophy of Abelard, the political community need not be a realm of injustice for the civic virtues can enact the order of reason in the political community. The Christian need not be a stranger to the life of the political community for he or she is not a stranger to the commands of natural reason. A perfect harmony is presented in Aquinas' thought between the two orders of human existence. The political community--its virtues and its goods--fits within the order of being on its own distinctive level. The deep pessimism of Augustine was lightened by Aquinas, for in his city, truth operates on many levels, and at the most natural of these, a unity between all men, due to their nature, asserts itself.

As has been seen, Christianity does not answer this question with a single voice. This thesis has presented two magnificent answers to this problem: the scepticism of Augustine and the naturalism of Aquinas. Now due to the subject matter of this question one cannot say who is right,

¹ Aquinas explicitly disagrees with Augustine's understanding of the nature of human psychology when he writes, "Although charity is love, not all love is charity. When it is said, therefore, that all virtue is the order of love, this can be understood either of love generally or of the love of charity". See Aquinas, S.T., 1a2ae. 62, 2.

as certitude cannot be had of these things. As such, the philosophies of these two men serve to balance the position of each other. Their most fundamental difference-- as it pertains to this thesis--was their judgements on the self-sufficiency of the ethical activity of human nature: whether there were natural ends which could be pursued, or whether grace was needed in order to perform any virtuous action. Both men draw different conclusions from the same sources, nature and revelation, and in a sense, both play upon the multi-dimensional relationship between virtue and the good. For Augustine, life is a highly focused quest, guided by the virtues, to a final end. All activities are good insofar as they lead us to this end, and activity can be named as vicious if it deviates from this path. For Aquinas, human life admits of a harmonious orchestration of numerous ends, some loftier than others, which must all be sought after various virtues. While Aquinas stresses the liberty of nature, Augustine highlights the Christian teaching that it is not an end in-itself. While Aquinas shows the harmony which exists between the pagans and the Christians, Augustine accents the differences. Both men captured part of the totality of Christian teaching for both men glimpsed part of that truth which, if fully expressed, "...the World itself could not contain the books that would be written." ²

In closing, it can be noted that Christianity never fully

² John 21:25.

rejected the political teachings of the pagans, for its greatest thinkers maintained that political philosophy should not be divorced from our quest for the final good of human life. ³ What it openly questioned was the source of the rectitude of the political community and the role it played in the life of the good man. ⁴ Now from the viewpoint of one situated in modernity, the mere fact that the Medievals and pagans asserted the existence of a human nature, and argued from a position which maintained a connection between politics and the quest for the good life, overrides their differences in precepts and proclaims the solidarity of their worlds against our own. So it can be said, in answer to that question of Tertullian, that "Jerusalem" and "Athens" do share in common at least one thing: the perennial question of virtue-based political philosophy--one which seeks to come to true knowledge of political things from the starting point of the soul and its greatest good.

³ See for example Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1179a35-1181b20.

⁴ See James Schall, "The Place of Christianity", Essays on Christianity and Political Philosophy, ed. George W. Carey and James V. Schall (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

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