

**Intelligence and Morality:
Translation and Comments on an Article
by Ambroise Gardeil, O.P.**

MATTHEW K. MINERD
*Ss. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Catholic Seminary
Pittsburgh, PA*

Translator’s Foreword

CURRENT ECCLESIASTICAL AND theological controversies surrounding *Amoris Laetitia* often concretize on the question of moral conscience, our grasp of moral norms, and the at once efficacious and personal embrace of those norms.¹ The theme is not new, of course, and for decades has generated a vast literature in Catholic circles regarding the nature and importance of conscience²—not always without the detrimental effect of exalting conscience (which, as an act of practical

¹ Merely for a recent popular reiteration of this point, see Nicole Winfield, “Pope Francis reaffirms primacy of conscience amid criticism of ‘Amoris Laetitia,’” *America*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/11/11/pope-francis-reaffirms-primacy-conscience-amid-criticism-amoris-laetitia>. Likewise, for a collection of popular essays on these matters (from perspectives that are not always wholly isomorphic to the present author, nor to Gardeil) see the Fall 2016 publication of Boston College’s “Church in the 21st Century Center,” *C21 Resources*, <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/top/church21/pdf/Final%202016%20Resources.pdf>.

² And, if we consider matters in full historical breadth, we would plunge ourselves into centuries of debates concerning conscience among the laxists, probabilists, probabiliorists, equi-probabilists, tutorists, et al. An integration of these discussions into the treatise on prudence awaits full treatment. See Benedict-Henri Merkelbach, “Quelle place assigner au traité de la conscience?” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 12 (1923): 170–183.

reasoning, can err) beyond its proper and due laudability. All things are done in conscience, even if that conscience be erroneous.

Given the heated nature of this topic (and the numerous arguments and sub-arguments involved among endlessly contentious parties), I am opting in this article/translation to provide a kind of “outside” view concerning these matters. In the spirit of this journal’s titular mission, this article presents something “old” to aid in reflection on these “new” problems: a translation of the two-part article “Intelligence et moralité” written by Ambroise Gardeil, O.P (1859–1931), for *Revue des jeunes* in 1927.³ Gardeil, an important figure in twentieth-century French Thomism, much of whose work has sadly not been translated into English, is perhaps most well-known for his influence on figures such as Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange⁴ and M.-D. Chenu.⁵ Much of Gardeil’s *oeuvre* was devoted to matters concerning theological methodology, works that provide many profound insights regarding issues related to fundamental theology.⁶ On the topic of conscience, he edited and completed the work of his teacher, Reginald Beaudouin, O.P., *Tractatus de conscientia*, yet another work deserving attention in this era of philosophico-theological upheaval.⁷ However important this technical text may be, in the present article, I wish to present a translation of his late-life, nontechnical reflections on moral knowledge in the hopes of indirectly addressing current ecclesiastical concerns by making available this faithful theologian’s reflection on conscience.

Primarily, Gardeil’s article is concerned with the philosophical

³ Ambroise Gardeil, “Intelligence et moralité,” *Revue des jeunes* (1927): 353–66 and 474–82.

⁴ See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “In memoriam: Le Père A. Gardeil,” *Revue thomiste* (1931): 797–808. Also, see Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005), 115–18.

⁵ See: Guy Mansini, “What is a Dogma?” *The Meaning and Truth of Dogma in Edouard le Roy and His Scholastic Opponents* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1985), 238; Christophe F. Potworoski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 45.

⁶ For detailed information concerning the work of Gardeil, see: H.-D. Gardeil, “Le Père Ambroise Gardeil (1859–1931),” *Bulletin thomiste*, October 1931, 69★–92★; Gardeil, *L’oeuvre théologique du Père Ambroise Gardeil* (Paris: Soisy-sur-Seine, 1956).

⁷ See Reginald Beaudouin, *Tractatus de conscientia*, ed. Ambroise Gardeil (Tournai, FR: Desclée, 1911).

elements involved in moral reasoning. For a theological investigation of moral reasoning and the moral life, one should consult his *La vraie vie chrétienne*.⁸ Despite this limited philosophical horizon, Gardeil's reflections on the reciprocal relationship between "intelligence" and "morality" are of profound importance for understanding the whole of the domain of practical reasoning (and, by extension, the speculatively practical reflection on it that is undertaken in moral philosophy). He takes as his guiding thread *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 58, aa. 4 and 5, wherein St. Thomas condenses this reciprocal relationship into two direct questions: "Can moral virtue exist without intellectual virtue?" and "Can intellectual virtue exist without moral virtue?" In short, his answers are that moral virtue cannot exist without the intellectual virtues of synderesis and prudence (the latter of which is also moral, as we will see) and that prudence cannot exist without moral virtue, for prudence requires efficacious intention of the end and a right will regarding the choice and command of the particular means.

In the present article, Gardeil is concerned with the first question, which he probes with great depth. Unfortunately, we do not have a direct presentation of his commentary on the second question.⁹ At this late point in his life, he appears to have been unable to revisit this theme so as to bring the two-part reflection to completion. Though it is my intention to fill out those details in a later article, I will here provide a sketch of several points vitally important to this topic, which was quite dear to Gardeil's "disciple,"¹⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange,¹¹ as well as to those whose own

⁸ See Ambroise Gardeil, *La vraie vie chrétienne*, 2nd ed., preface by Jacques Maritain (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer & Cie, 1935).

⁹ However, we do have related matters treated in: Ambroise Gardeil, "Les exigences objectives de l'action," *Revue thomiste* 6 (1898): 125–38 and 269–94; Gardeil, "L'action: ses ressources subjectives," *Revue thomiste* 7 (1899): 23–39; Gardeil, "Les ressources de vouloir," *Revue thomiste* 7 (1899): 447–61; "Les ressources de la raison pratique: Gardeil, *Utrum beatitudo sit operatio intellectus practici* (1)," *Revue thomiste* 8 (1900): 377–99; Gardeil, "Ce qu'il y a vrai dans le néo-scotisme," *Revue thomiste* 8 (1900): 531–50 and 648–65, and *Revue thomiste* 9 (1901): 407–43. Likewise, A. Gardeil, see *La vraie vie chrétienne*, cited above.

¹⁰ This is not a wholly inappropriate title, at least based on Garrigou-Lagrange's own language, for he refers Gardeil as "our master," *noster magister*, in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione per ecclesiam Catholicam proposita*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (Rome: Desclée et socii, 1950), xin1.

¹¹ Certainly, their positions are not always the same, as can be seen, for example, in Garrigou-Lagrange's disagreement regarding the self-knowledge that is

intellectual formation owed much to the unfairly named “Sacred monster of Thomism.”

By focusing on the two important questions posed in *ST I-II*, q. 58, aa. 4 and 5, Gardeil indeed goes to the heart of the nature of practical reasoning. We could re-interpret the aforementioned two questions by saying that they represent “two faces” of one question or issue: What is the nature of prudential reasoning? Thus, the two aforementioned questions represent (1) the “face” of formal specification and (2) that of exercise. The first emerges from the initial insights of *synderesis* (in the natural order) and of faith (in the order of supernatural truths),¹² which insights carry within themselves the germ of the whole moral life. This formal specification is discursively elaborated from ends to means by prudence’s reasoning insofar as prudence is an intellectual virtue, perfecting the intellect in this moral-practical discourse. It also is edified, indirectly, by cultural developments, moral philosophy, and moral theology. The other “face” emerges effectively (i.e., as regards efficient causality) from the will’s infinite ordination, which, even in the order of nature, is harmonized with the positively infinite good in general.¹³ As expressed by Pierre-Marie Emonet, O.P.: “But where are the boundaries of the universal Good? And what limits enclose happiness? Thus it is in the desire of an infinite amplitude that the root of freedom resides.”¹⁴ Or, in the profound reflection by Maritain (though, one that presupposes the supernatural order)¹⁵:

had by the separated soul (as well as the case of angelic self-knowledge). See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Utrum mens seipsam per essentiam cognoscat, an per aliquam speciem,” *Angelicum* 5 (1928): 37–54. A translation of this essay is anticipated in the near future in a collected volume to be published by Emmaus Academic.

¹² Indeed, in Gardeil’s article, this important point is not emphasized, and it does not come to the fore in Aquinas either. Thus, we must remember that the discussion is primarily philosophical in nature and requires careful extension to include the way that faith, hope, and charity (in the supernatural domain) are super-analogous to *synderesis*, the will’s natural desire for beatitude, and the natural love for God (in the domain of nature). This point is indicated succinctly in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine* (Turin, IT: Berruti, 1951), 312.

¹³ It goes without saying that, for the Thomist school, this is not to be confused with “the Deity as such, in its inner mystery.”

¹⁴ Pierre-Marie Emonet, *The Greatest Marvel of Nature: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 70–71. For Emonet’s recollections of Garrigou-Lagrange, see “Un maître prestigieux,” *Angelicum* 42 (1965): 195–99.

¹⁵ To understand Maritain’s thought on the controverted “natural desire for

[Thomist philosophy] shows us in the human will a bottomless pit which subsisting Good, which God alone can fill. . . . It is only before the Divine Essence, intuitively known as the plenitude of all good, that all freedom disappears, the freedom of exercise as well as the freedom of specification. Then, in the light of that blessed vision, our will, finally satisfied, will be impelled towards God with all its weight, although perfectly vitally and spontaneously; it will plunge into Him, strike Him like a thunderbolt, in an infinite necessity of loving without end the infinite Love.¹⁶

When we understand practical reason, we must always consider the interaction of “heart” and “reason” if we are to fully and rightly understand the nature of prudence. As felicitously explained by another Thomist, Yves R. Simon, himself influenced by the same school of thought as Gardeil (through the intermediacy of Jacques Maritain and, through him, Garrigou-Lagrange):

Prudence does not reside in the intellect alone; or rather, it resides in the intellect indeed, but as inclined by a virtuous heart. . . . Indeed according to Aristotle, prudence is what brings the heart and the reason together. . . .

Who and what we are matters greatly in choosing the course of action that is right for us. Our choice, therefore, will not necessarily be everybody’s choice. But if we are trained in virtue, the choice we make will be objectively right, for our judgment guided by inclination will be the right judgment under our circumstances. Consciously looking for the best choice, we shall attain our object if our reason agrees with our heart, so to speak, or if, as some Scholastics used to put it, we join right reason to good will . . . Understanding human nature, we can train ourselves in virtues according to objective standards. And whoever succeeds in acquiring virtues will be

vision of God,” one must remember that he never abandons the general Thomist position that such a desire is conditioned, inefficacious, and elicited. Nonetheless, one should also consider remarks such as those made in Maritain, *Untrammelled Approaches*, trans. Bernard Doering (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 14n15 and 411.

¹⁶ See Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison and J. Gordon Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 274–77.

easily recognized, as we suggested at the start of our discussion, by his or her unshakable dependability in human affairs.¹⁷

Finally, this mutual influence of causality is well summarized by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange himself as follows:

The same law of mutual relations between various kinds of cause must regulate the relations between the intellect and the will at the completion of deliberation. The answer of the Thomists is not a crafty device; it is based upon the very definition of becoming. In the case of the final practical judgment and the act of the will which precedes and follows it, there is no priority of time. At one and the same time, the will applies the intellect to judge what it must choose, and is directed by the intellect in its choice. There is here only a priority of nature and reciprocal priority according to the point of view that one takes of it. In the order of extrinsic formal causality (directive idea), there is priority of judgment, since the judgment actually directs the will that it may choose in a certain manner; but in the order of efficient causality, there is priority of volition which applies the intellect to judge in such a way, priority of volition which can suspend the inquiry of the intellect or let it proceed. The will is thus the cause of the attraction itself that it experiences, in this sense, that it depends upon the will to cause the intellect to judge that a certain good is by nature disposed to move it; it is the cause of the direction that it receives, insofar as it moves the intellect to impress upon it this direction.¹⁸

As has already been indicated, in the article presented here, Gardeil is concerned with the first “face”—how virtue depends upon intelligence. Thus, he will emphasize synderesis and prudence insofar as the latter is an intellectual virtue. One sees this precision in his vocabulary when he writes that he is considering prudence not “as a capacity for moral governance *but in the consideration of the intellectual values that one ought to hold in order to have such governance*” (emphasis added). It is only

¹⁷ Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 101 and 118–19.

¹⁸ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *God: His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies*, vol. 2, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1955), 246.

at the end of the article that he rightly notes that a further article is required so as to move the consideration from the “intellectual side” of prudence to its moral and existential-effective side:

The conclusion of this [prudential] syllogism yearns to be proposed not only as a duty, but imposed as a command. It does not suffice to say to oneself, “It is necessary to do this or that”; it is necessary to say imperatively to oneself, “Do it.” And for that, it is necessary that the prudential verdict be stopped and solidified, as it were, by a voluntary determination that pours out its absolute inclination onto conduct. Thus is it that the intellectual virtue of prudence is metamorphosed into a moral virtue. But, to follow it in this prolongation of itself would be to encroach upon the second article that we ought to comment upon: whether there is intellectual virtue without moral virtue?

Given that the primary act of prudence is command,¹⁹ this further discussion is utterly necessary, lest its character (and with it, the character of practical truth as such) be misunderstood. However, I am leaving that for my own later extension of the work that Gardeil has set out upon so excellently in this article.

Still, even in this very text, Gardeil is not indifferent to the appetitive “side” of practical intellection.²⁰ In the above-cited text, Garrigou-Lagrange emphasizes the mutual causality of intellect and will in the order of choice (i.e., of prudential reasoning). For his part, Gardeil pushes the analysis back to the roots of practical reasoning into the order of intention, to the will’s initial resting in the moral ends known by synderesis. Indeed, making use of Reinhard Hütter’s felicitous expression for synderesis, “the primordial conscience,”²¹ we must also give careful attention to the initial and natural inclination of the will to its own goods when suitably proposed, which we could call “the primordial heart”:

Therefore, the fundamental moral education will consist in forming THE HEART—that is, the will, envisioned in its

¹⁹ See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] II-II, q. 47, a. 8.

²⁰ And elsewhere; see note 8 above.

²¹ See Reinhard Hütter, “To Be Good Is to Do the Truth: Being, Truth, the Good, and the Primordial Conscience in a Thomist Perspective,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15, no. 1 (2017): 53–73.

initial act of taking pleasure in the good and the true end of the being who possesses it. It will not be a question of instruction, properly speaking. The intellectual formation of the heart depends upon a simple maieutic [i.e., clarifying one's ideas]. It consists in drawing the attention of the human being to the character of reason, which, in him, takes precedence over all the others and differentiates him from all that is inferior in him and around him to make him see that, things being so, the ends of his actions ought to be in harmony with this noble part of himself, which completes him and totalizes him as a man and penetrates his spirit with the exigencies of these ends. As regards the formation, properly speaking, of the "heart," it consists in bringing about the natural reactions of the will in face of this evident goodness, to invite the will to consent to it.

We should turn now to Gardeil's article, a kind of extended reflection on the basic facts of moral reasoning considered primarily from the perspective of its intellectual exigencies. He himself defined his own theological-intellectual work, as presented in *La crédibilité et l'apologetique*, *Le donné révélé et la théologie*, and *La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, as being a kind of prolegomena to theological science, that is, as a reflection upon the very conditions of such knowledge.²² This essay should be read as one part of a philosophical prolegomenon to the conditions of moral knowledge and the prudential exercise of the moral life.²³ Though it must be supplemented by a second part concerned with "virtuous love and moral intelligence," it is nonetheless quite true that, in a full and mature account of moral reasoning and conscience (and, hence too, prudence, of which right and certain conscience is an act²⁴), "the intelligence of morality" plays an undeniable and central role. To highlight this import, I will end my introduction with the insightful words of Maritain, which will help to summarize the points expressed below in Gardeil's article:

²² See H.-D. Gardeil, "Le Père Ambroise Gardeil," 69*.

²³ In this, it is akin to Yves Simon's youthful work *A Critique of Moral Knowledge*, trans. Ralph McInerny (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

²⁴ See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La prudence dans l'organisme des vertus," *Revue thomiste* 31, n.s. 9 (1926): 411–42. A translation of this essay is anticipated in the near future in a collected volume to be published by Emmaus Academic.

In a word [contemporary atheistic existentialists] imagine that morality exempts us from conscience and substitutes its golden rules for that flexible and delicate instrument (which costs us so dear) and for its invincibly personal judgment. They imagine that morality offers that same substitute for the likewise invincibly personal judgment (which is irreducible to any kind of science) of the virtue of prudence, whose cost is still more disquietingly high. They replace all this by the Pythia's chasm because they have thrown out reason and make the formal element of morality consist in pure liberty alone. Let the perplexed young man go cock an ear at that hole of the oracle; his liberty itself will tell him how to make use of liberty.

Above all, let no man give him counsel! The least bit of advice comports the risk of causing his liberty to wither, of preventing the handsome serpent from crawling out of the hole. For the liberty of these philosophers of liberty is singularly fragile. In uprooting it from reason, they have themselves made an invalid of it. But we for our part do not fear to counsel human liberty. Cram it with advice as much as you like, we know that it is strong enough to digest advice and that it thrives on rational motivations which it bends as it pleases and which it alone can render efficacious. In short, by suppressing generality and universal law, you suppress liberty; and what you have left is nothing but that amorphous impulse surging out of the night which is but a false image of liberty. Because when you suppress generality and universal law, you suppress reason, in which liberty, whole and entire, has its root (*De veritate*, q. 24, a. 2) and from which emanates in man so vast a desire that no motive in the world and no objective solicitation, except Beatitude seen face to face, suffices to determine it.²⁵

Intelligence and Morality²⁶

St. Thomas has examined, in all of its aspects, the problem of the reciprocal relations of intelligence and morality, though nowhere as closely

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galangier and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Pantheon, 1948), 60–61.

²⁶ Here begins the translation of Ambroise Gardeil, "Intelligence et moralité," *Revue des jeunes* 2 (1927): 353–66 and 474–82. The translator would like to thank Jean-Michel Potin, O.P., and the Dominican province of France for granting permission to publish this translation.

as in these two articles of the *Summa theologiae*, which are so unbreakably intertwined:

Can moral virtue exist without intellectual virtue?
 Can intellectual virtue exist without moral virtue?²⁷

This is not a battle of abstract entities. It is in the living man that the accord or conflict is envisioned. Essentially, virtue is the perfection of a subject capable of possessing it. Virtue renders him the beneficiary of an intrinsic increase in value. A graft upon choice, it is inserted in a still-inchoate nature and alters its lifeblood. The improved being, under the grip of virtue, can develop itself, apart from the shifting offshoots of the wild stock, only in the direction of the added value of quality, inoculated by its graft.

This psychological (and therefore subjective) character of the knowledge [*science*] of virtue, of the morality of virtue, does not imply any relativism for these values. Subjectivity is not necessarily subjectivism. The principles of morality and of moral philosophy, as well as the science and received rules of art, retain their objective values. However, these objective values, in some manner, are captive, integrated, and reabsorbed into the virtuous subject. They are transposed in him to the state of inclinations, of vital energies, of tendencies that, by being triggered, produce normally, and as a source, moral acts, exact theorems and procedures conformed to the rules of art or of craftsmanship. The virtuous—we understand this word in the broad sense that is given to it here—the truly virtuous person has become, as it were, a permanent source of moral, scientific, and artistic developments, which, in order to be easy and vital, possess a scope as absolute as moral philosophy, speculative science, or the arts. Such is this skillfully grafted bush, reproducing—in a timely manner and like nature—the most valued breeds objectively listed in horticulturalists’ catalogues.

One grasps now that, though not having a title in the current style (“science and morality,” “art and morality,” etc.), our articles pose the same questions concerning the conflict and agreement between these values in themselves. However, in a certain sense, St. Thomas’s approach is different. It is the living human, in what makes him most human, in what decidedly distinguishes him from the inferior beings

²⁷ ST I-II, q. 58, aa. 4 and 5.

that surround him and from the animality in which he participates—it is man living his superior life—who is, as it were, opposed to himself, above himself, and opposed in the two great directions that divide his typical perfection: intelligence and morality. Therefore, it is an interior drama that will unfold.

★★★

“Can moral virtue exist without intellectual virtue?” Let us clarify this formula, and since we interpret St. Thomas, let us recall that, for him, the moral virtues are named as being prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. These are their general headings, under which we must understand there to be an entire populace of secondary and annexed virtues: good counsel, religion, equity, courage, patience, sobriety, humility, and so on. On the other hand, the intellectual “virtues” are: the understanding of first principles (both speculative and practical), wisdom (or, first philosophy), and science; once again prudence (no longer as a capacity for moral governance, but in the consideration of the intellectual values that one must hold in order to have such governance); finally, art, in its broadest sense—the technical arts and the liberal arts, including among them the arts of the beautiful inasmuch as their making involves objective rules. St. Thomas did not invent this enumeration; he has borrowed it from the treasuries of an age-old tradition. Have we changed much from them?

Nobody can reasonably doubt that the moral virtues belong properly to man, that they are, in the first place, human. As regards the intellectual virtues, one hesitates sometimes to see in them the virtues of humanity as such. Their object is exterior to us and seems at first sight foreign to our nature. St. Augustine called them “adventitious” and refused to admit that they perfect man. This is a mistake, we think, for all of them, in various capacities, make us enter into possession of being, which, according to St. Thomas, is naturally coordinated to the human intellect. No being is foreign to us, given that the object of intellect is all of the Real and given that the intellect itself, of its own nature, is capable of becoming all things—ideally, properly understood.²⁸ Therefore, to Being itself, inasmuch as it is offered to

²⁸ [Translator’s note: To put it another way, the intellect is capable of intentionally becoming all things; or, the intellect is capable of objective union with all things. On this topic, the interested reader would benefit from a reading of Josef Pieper, *Living the Truth*, trans. Lothar Krauth and Stella Lange (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989).]

us as evident, there will correspond in us, naturally, the understanding of principles; to being concluded from these principles, in its chief conclusions, there will correspond Wisdom; in its more distant conclusions, there will correspond Science; to the good, the property of evident being, there will correspond the understanding of moral principles called Synderesis; to being envisioned as the end of the transformative activity of man (no longer of *homo sapiens*, but of *homo faber*), there will correspond Art. On account of the essential constitution of our intellectual nature, which from the outset coheres with all being, all these aspects of being constitute for it so many predestined ways of belonging; and, consequently, the habitude of the soul for seizing it, in order to live intellectually by it, will not be adventitious, but rather, will be the prolongation of our humanity passing beyond itself in order to grasp the Universe; therefore, it will be a qualitative habitude—in other words, a virtue, a human virtue, although of the intellectual order, less human in certain regards than moral virtue.

Thanks to these explanations, the question raised in its henceforth concrete tenor is as follows: Is moral virtue (prudence, justice, fortitude, or temperance) possible without one or several of the intellectual virtues that we have come to enumerate?

Before hearing St. Thomas's solution (and in order to seize the enduring topicality of that solution), it is not irrelevant for us to read the objections that he opposes to it in advance; before considering the argument pro, we will consider the argument contra.

Contra—We are confronted with what one could call the Boeotian²⁹ conception of moral virtue. It is more frequent and of greater influence than one believes it to be. St. Thomas expositis it briefly in his three objections. The first refuses to the intellectual virtues the right to rule morality; the other two adduce facts in support of the contention.

As a matter of law, moral virtue is doubtlessly presented as a human inclination to consent to the laws decreed by reason. But, by what reason? By ours, by this educated reason that is poured out into the intellectual virtues? This does not seem necessary. Is not the Order of

²⁹ [Translator's note: Meaning "ignorant" or "dull," being derived from Boeotia, a rural district surrounding Thebes. Its inhabitants were so judged by more urbane Greeks. See "Boeotian (adj.)," [https://www.etymonline.com/word/Boeotian.](https://www.etymonline.com/word/Boeotian)]

the Universe to which we belong assured by simple obedience to the Supreme Reason? Now, this *concentus* takes place without any knowledge of this Reason by the natures that obey it. Why could it not be thus too in man? Why does his nature, the work of the Supreme, Ordaining Reason, not suffice to assure the normal development of his customs, of his morality—and therefore of his moral virtues?³⁰

In fact, it is so. Limited people, in whom reason and the intellectual virtues are reduced to their simplest expression, *in quibus non multum viget usus rationis*, are often the most virtuous. Would not virtue thus be a question of temperament? There are persons who are naturally chided, without rational judgment (above all under the learned form of the intellectual virtues) having to intervene.

It will not be forbidden to us to indicate the modern extensions of these objections. Without a doubt, it is not ordinarily for the benefit of the Supreme Reason that modern thinkers suppress the influence of personal reason (formed and educated by the intellectual virtues) upon morality. They preserve only the negative part of this conclusion. I find it in the naturalist conception of morality.

Man is born good—Jean-Jacques has said so. His conscience, his eternal instinct, suffices to conduct him. Underneath the slag of civilized humanity, let us find human nature, individual and concrete, and let us follow it. One follows it, indeed, and the adventure begun in the idyllic manner with Paul and Virginia and the sheepfolds of Trianon comes to its end with the virtuous Robespierre and the September Massacres, the explosion of the just anger of the people, as I recently heard it said at the Sorbonne.

Or, rather, it was not brought to completion with this adventure. In our days, the theory has been made scholarly. It is no longer a question of God, nor even of reason, nor of nature. What is morality? It is that which produces human values. However, what is a human value? That which procures the well-being and happiness of Humanity! Humanity, such is now the touchstone of morality. To know and catalogue its resources and its impulses in light of sociology, to develop by social education those who submit, just as the horticulturalists select and enable useful varieties to be reproduced—this is the only moral formation that is beyond dispute, being established solely upon positivist foundations. Let us brand virtue the product of such an education. In this way is the question that has been raised resolved.

³⁰ Obviously, I paraphrase.

However, one would like to know what constitutes a human value, one that is truly useful to humanity. But, in answer to this question, one finds chaos. It is what preserves the health of society, one says: order, authority. No, it is what destroys it: revolution is the normal state from which progress emerges. It is instruction, finally accessible to all. No, it is the development of physical education. It is the formation of an intellectual elite, though set apart from the masses. The masses, yet another name for nature! Finally, let us develop everything, in every direction and without theory. The true morality of humanity will ultimately recognize its own. Morality is that which ultimately imposes itself. To have conquered—this is the sign of what conforms to the true Humanity. Lenin is a saint, and the ancient Leonidas was never anything but an abject adventurer.³¹

Such is the logical consequence of the principle that, in the fact of moral virtue, the spontaneity of virtue is everything and personal intellectual virtue is nothing. And certain *enfants terribles* have not neglected to formulate these consequences theoretically.

After which, nothing will remain except to say with Brutus: “Virtue, you are only a name.” This is equally a solution, the radical solution this time.

St. Thomas refused this solution. And behold, the measured and wholly serene response that he opposes to these ravings: without a doubt, moral virtue can exist without the particular intellectual virtues that are Wisdom (i.e., philosophy, even moral philosophy), Science (including the science of manners), and, finally, Art. But, there is never moral virtue without understanding [intelligence] of the first principles of morality nor without personal prudence.

I

The first of these assertions is not developed by St. Thomas in his article, doubtlessly because he regards the facts recalled in the second and third objections as not suffering any instance, in virtue of the adage *contra factum non valet ratio*. For him, as for all the world besides, it is a fact of experience that morality is encountered, even in a superior state, in the unlearned (i.e., in individuals upon whom philosophy, science, and art have no hold).

The preliminary recognition of this evidence of the positive order stands directly against all these systems that we have not yet named

³¹ See Jean Weber, “Une étude réaliste de l’acte et ses conséquences morale,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 2 (1894): 549–60.

and that boast of obtaining moralization by means of instruction strictly speaking, by purely intellectual formation as much at the primary level as at the level of higher education, by the arts of the beautiful or technical education. According to St. Thomas, instruction does not, of itself, endow one with morality.

However, let us give close attention to what he says and to what he does not say. He does not say that instruction is useless for morality. This would be false for many reasons. However, he does say: moral virtue can exist without certain intellectual virtues. The latter point has a completely different meaning from the former.

To understand its meaning, we must defer to the second article of the current question. It is there that we find designated the author of the opinion that he combats here, and it is not yet Jules Ferry,³² but it is already Socrates.

This fine intellectual temperament, this sage of reason, held that one can never sin when knowledge [*science*] is present. What is necessary is to learn, with him, from the science of the rules of the Good. He concluded from this that every sin is, at its foundation, only ignorance. Therefore, would the power of reason over the body and the inferior faculties be, according to him, despotic? In Aristotle's opinion, it seems necessary to grant this conclusion. In any case, according to Socrates, to make a man virtuous, it suffices that his reason be perfectly instructed in the laws of the good. Thus, every virtue of man is concentrated in instructed reason. There are no virtues, properly speaking, except intellectual ones, and our prudences are sciences.

Certainly, there is a kind of gentility expressed in this conception. One would wish, for the sake of humanity's beauty, that it would be thus. But would not Socrates have taken for reality what is, in the majority of men, only the optative of his great soul?³³

Aristotle, the positive philosopher who was given the mission of making the Ideas descend from their pedestal, undertook the task of overthrowing the Socratic superman.

It is wholly and simply false, he thinks. Reason does not have this

³² [Translator's note: A nineteenth-century reformer of education in France.]

³³ [Translator's note: The optative mood expresses a wish: "If it only were the case that . . ."]

despotic power over the will and the inferior appetites. Its power is political. That, it must take into account the spontaneities and resistances of the living matter that it governs. Reason does not deal with automatons, “with slaves that do not have the power of resisting,” but with energies that are, in a certain sense, “free” and that have a certain right to contradict. Without a doubt, this right is what cannot be abdicated by a nature (even an inferior and subordinate one) that does not wish to be violated in what is natural to it.

But what will limit this right in its exercise? From this fact, the conflict is placed in man’s interior. And it will result, as St. Augustine (a noteworthy specialist in the matter) remarks in his own turn, that, many times: “Reason marches forward and what follows? A weak will, and sometimes nothing!” And St. Paul had spoken even more strongly. Therefore, virtue does not appear to be the simple activation of an instructed reason.

Aristotle, who never forgets that he is a logician, explains this avatar of the rational venturing upon the terrain of the syllogism. In the syllogism of the virtuous man, he says:

I must act according to reason.

Now, reason is to moderate its passions.

Therefore, I must moderate my passions.

The “incontinent” man, under the sway of a current or habitual passion that he is incapable of restraining, introduces a surreptitious minor premise, which eliminates the other: Now, reason is to follow my passion.

And he does not fail to speak truthfully, the unfortunate man!—as truthfully as the virtuous—for his reason, in the state in which he finds himself, cannot see and judge otherwise.³⁴ Therefore, from the speculative point of view, he is right to judge thus and, consequently,

³⁴ [Translator’s note: We see here the intimate dependence of prudence upon the moral virtues, according to the maxim, based upon book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that “Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei [As a given man is, so does the end seem to him].” And we can add: “And as the ends seem, so too do the means.” See, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange, *De beatitudine*, 389: “For example, if someone is chaste, those things that pertain to chastity seem to him to be good and suitable because they are conformed to his appetite, which has been rectified through chastity. Thus, the rectitude of the principles of moral science descend, in a vital manner, through right reason to one’s judgment concerning singular actions” (my translation).]

to hold on to the principle of rational primacy posited by Socrates—his syllogism concludes validly; it is the celebrated “syllogism of the incontinent person.”

Therefore, what one must overcome, in order to defend true virtue against this immoral sophism, is not the major premise. Aristotle’s incontinent man superbly maintains it. He says “Reason” with as much a swell in his voice as any of our contemporary rationalist educators could put in his own voice. What one must overcome is the minor premise suggested by his incontinence. Now, upon this, the most learned rational morality, philosophy, and artistic formation have no hold. What is lacking is the science, situated on the terrain of the practice of life, of the minor premises that beget and determine effective action directly. In this sense, Socrates spoke well in saying that, when science is present, one does not sin. But, it is necessary to understand that it is not the science of the general, speculative principles of reason, but instead, the practical “science”³⁵ to which a reason released from passions can arrive, touching particular truths that directly and immediately provide the virtuous decision.

Finally, philosophy, art, science and speculative morality are not decisive when it is a matter of effective morality. One can dispense with them, and this is what has been seen well by those people who have observed that, on this point of real virtue, the uneducated know it as much and more than the learned, the literati, and artists.

But this does not mean that, if—by some other means still to be discovered—this practical knowledge, the generator of morality, is found assuredly, the intellectual virtues could not reappear as complementary factors. Indeed, it is conceivable that, either by the precisions that they furnish or by the reasoned (and therefore firm and vigorous) convictions that they bring to birth, or by the state of super-elevated soul that they provoke, sciences and arts constitute a terrain of culture eminently appropriate to the development of a superior morality. Did not St. Jerome say, “Love the study of the Scriptures, and you will no longer love the vices of the flesh”?³⁶

³⁵ [Translator’s note: The quotation marks are added, as “science” here is not the same as the speculatively practical mode of discourse by which practical notions are discussed in moral philosophy and ordered according to the objective relationships found among principles and conclusions. It is obvious that Gardeil knows of this distinction and is using the term “science” broadly here.]

³⁶ Jerome, Epistle 125, to Rusticus, cited in *ST II-II*, q. 188, a. 5.

But, thus placed back in their station, the intellectual virtues have their worth by being nothing more than a luxury and an enhancement. The foundation of morality has its source elsewhere. Where is this found? This is what St. Thomas will reveal to us in his second conclusion.

II³⁷

St. Thomas assures us that moral virtue cannot exist without certain intellectual virtues—namely, the understanding of first principles of morality and prudence.

Indeed, what is a virtuous man? He is not the man who makes a profession of loving virtue, who has virtuous intentions. The virtuous man is he who, in the details of his life, always chooses the moral good in such a manner that his intentions are embodied in individual acts. The habitual choice and practice of righteousness—behold, this is what characterizes moral virtue.

Now, this choice cannot have the quality of righteousness except upon two conditions: (1) that one has firmly consented to the general exigencies of the rational Good (to what one could call the Ends of human morality); (2) that, consequently, one wills practically and effectively, in a habitual manner, the means that, in the details of life, assure the reign of these Ends.

Now, the first of these conditions presupposes that one has an understanding of the first principles of morality; the second requires the special lights of prudence.

(1) The good of human mores [*mœurs*] is their conformity with reason, which in man is the element of value, what distinguishes him from animality, from his inferior and common part. Therefore, in order to be virtuous, it is necessary to consent to the rational good. Now, to consent to it, it is necessary that one know it. Thus, behold the place made, at the point of departure of morality, for a first virtue, the understanding of the true ends of man, of his rational good.

Here is a speculative virtue, but one that has a scope that is already practical. It does not only state the fact. It decrees. There is an equivalence and a convertibility for man between the formula “the rational good is the true good of humanity” and this other, “it is necessary to act in harmony with the rational good.” The intellect that perceives them sees these two equally speculative formulas in one another.

³⁷ [Translator’s note: This is where the second half of the article, cited above, begins.]

However, the first (a simple view and statement of fact) is not efficacious. One could be interested in it as in a fact of natural human history. The second, on the contrary, concerns the will, which is always on the alert when it is a matter of the good of man. This about-face is accomplished, moreover, without loss of the speculative value, by a simple change in orientation. It is always from within its pure intellectual value, if one can speak in this manner, that our principle makes contact with voluntary action: it is from the depths of its intellectual value that it motivates voluntary action and directs it.³⁸ The first principle of morality is, in itself, purely speculative. Its practical value is a consequence. It is “the extension” of it, says St. Thomas, that means that, if the will were not “behind” [*derrière*] the intellect, its purveyor of goods, this practical value would exist only ideally and in a perspectival manner.

This intellectual virtue has nothing complicated about it, nor anything learned. It is the pure reaction of the intellect faced with these two realities placed in its presence: on the one hand, the rational Good and, on the other hand, man, capable of acting. Man, you ought to act as a man: you ought to do the good that is in harmony with that which makes you to be man—reason. For example, you ought to moderate your passions according to reason’s exigencies; you ought to place in your relations with your fellow men an order that reason approves. These principles are easy. All are capable of perceiving them. All approve them. They bear their proof within themselves, and this proof lies in these two words: Be human [*Sois homme*]!

The contemporary error finds itself, from this fact, ousted. In order to found human morality, there is no need to have recourse to a theoretical teaching, to a technical instruction. It suffices that one knows oneself and has noticed the nobility of one’s being. After this, it will be necessary to consent to the rational good that alone corresponds to this nobility. This is a virtue, a great virtue, but it is not a virtue that is acquired in schools and laboratories.

This consent is given; immediately and already, moral virtue exists, completely formed in what is fundamental to it. Indeed, at any development that it reaches, it will never be anything but a habitual consent to these dictates of the first intellectual virtue that had decreed the foundational exigencies of man’s good, the obligation to obey the rational good. Without a doubt, this universal consent does not suffice

³⁸ See Martin Gillet, *Du fondement intellectuel de la morale d’après Aristote* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1905).

to make a completely virtuous man—complete virtue consists in effective (and, hence, infinitely varied) realizations. What we wish to say is that, without this introductory rectification of human appetite, which underlies all its eventual determinations, the practical realizations would be impossible; they would have no moral meaning.

Therefore, the fundamental moral education will consist in forming THE HEART—that is, the will, envisioned in its initial act of taking pleasure in the good and the true end of the being who possesses it. It will not be a question of instruction, properly speaking. The intellectual formation of the heart depends upon a simple maieutic [i.e., clarifying one's ideas]. It consists in drawing the attention of the human being to the character of reason, which, in him, takes precedence over all the others and differentiates him from all that is inferior in him and around him to make him see that, things being so, the ends of his actions ought to be in harmony with this noble part of himself, which completes him and totalizes him as a man and penetrates his spirit with the exigencies of these ends. As regards the formation, properly speaking, of the “heart,” it consists in bringing about the natural reactions of the will in face of this evident goodness, to invite the will to consent to it. Such a consent has nothing of the character of being forced, nothing of the character of a violent action, for it is inscribed in the natural laws of a human will's unfolding. Still, it is necessary to aid him, who for the first time has arrived at this (or who returns to it), to make this personal effort. In this sense, and within their limits, our secular educators have been right to say, “Before all else, be personal.” Yes, be personal—but not by making arise from you any innate thing whatsoever by a personalism of an arbitrary will; instead, be personal by letting loose your personal effort in the direction of the natural bent of your human will, which is, before all else, rational.

This double formation of the general conscience and of the heart does not require speculation. It demands simply that one looks truly upon oneself and that one loves what one has thus seen. In this way, St. Thomas's conclusion is imposed: moral virtue cannot exist without understanding [*l'intelligence*].

(2) But, these general views of the understanding do not suffice. The moral virtue that would remain in this case would not be necessarily directive [of one's action]. We have known all these kinds of façade characters, who extol the true rational good, who even desire it, and whose actions contradict his principles and aspirations. “The voice of Jacob, but the hands of Esau,” says the Bible (Gen 27:22).

A virtue, in order to be such—that is to say, in order to represent the final word on what one can do in its domain—(*virtus ultimum potentiae*) must be not only directive, which could take place in fits and starts, but must be necessarily directive. It must leave nothing to chance in its execution of virtuous intentions. It must not rely on insufficiently reflective inspirations, upon any impulses whatsoever, which sometimes can be good and at other times are in contradiction with the dictates of general conscience. “One does everything in conscience,” one of my students said to me sadly one day, having become one of the Masters of the Moral Theology of St. Thomas.

What is this instrument? St. Thomas calls it prudence, which he regards here only as an intellectual virtue. It is known that, on the other hand, he classes it among the moral virtues. We will see why. But, in any case, the pending question, the necessity of the intellectual virtues for moral virtues, can appeal only to intellectual values. Now, nobody can doubt that prudence holds these latter. And hence, St. Thomas can designate it as the predestined light of our choice of details.

Indeed, how, without a new intellectual virtue, can I obtain something more precise than the general dictates of the understanding of moral principles so that, in each case that is presented, often requiring the taking of an immediate position, I choose at the right moment and, as the source, the part that is in harmony with the right intentions of my superior moral conscience if I do not have in me, wholly formed in advance and in a habitual state, a light that makes me discern, in the maze of circumstances in which it is enveloped, where the just solution lies, that which responds to my virtuous intentions?

One of the functions of prudence is precisely to appraise and judge, by force of reflection, at least by way of a counsel held interiorly, where the facts are sized up in the light of principles, the just rational part, which will illuminate and direct the will in its choices and make of it a moral will upon the very terrain of life’s complexity. A virtue that is no longer theoretical but, so to speak, tactical, at once supple like the changing matter of human acts, all the details of which it registers and weighs out, and rigid like the first principles of moral actions, about which its sole ambition is to decree the exigencies—does not prudence have all that is needed for constituting the instrument of transmission that we are seeking?

Now, in this illuminative role, it behaves like an intellectual virtue. Therefore, St. Thomas concludes reasonably that moral virtue, which is essentially directive, cannot do without the intellectual virtue of prudence.

This illuminative role is not the only one; I have not forgotten this fact. If the verdict of prudence remained in the lines of intellectuality, proposing (in a manner that was so authoritative and urgent) only the true and rational solutions of our particular choices, this intellectual virtue would be powerless against the passion's caprices, powerless against the substitution of minor premises of concupiscence for its rational minor premises, which the incontinent man fraudulently introduces into the moral syllogism. Therefore, the conclusion of this syllogism yearns to be not only proposed as a duty, but imposed as a command. It does not suffice to say to oneself, "It is necessary to do this or that." It is necessary to say imperatively to oneself, "Do it." And for that, it is necessary that the prudential verdict be stopped and solidified, as it were, by a voluntary determination that pours out its absolute inclination onto conduct. Thus is it that the intellectual virtue of prudence is metamorphosed into a moral virtue. But, to follow it in this prolongation of itself would be to encroach upon the second article that we ought to comment upon: whether there is intellectual virtue without moral virtue?

What we have said suffices, it seems to us, to refute the idea of moral formation that we have qualified as being Boeotian and naturalist without feeling ourselves obliged to accept methods that are intellectualist, scientific, or artistic. Neither nature nor temperament, however virtuous one may suppose them to be, suffices for securing moral virtue—no more than do discipline and passive obedience, which remove the light of reason from us from us in order to direct us. Whether springing from servility or from love, the sway of rulers, who have not, as far as I know, confiscated the whole of morality, can give rise to the worst errors. But the speculative sciences, instruction, and artistic education, are just as useless and powerless.

Moral virtue is born from an intellect that is open to the true exigencies of the good. It is constituted in its fundamental being by a firm consent of the will to these exigencies, concentrated in this evident principle: "Man, act according to reason." Finally, it takes shape under the influence of the intellectual virtue of prudence, which, with a rigidity combined with flexibility, illuminates and directs, from within its speculative lights, practical choices concerning the details of life. N-V