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## **Abstract**

### ***A Historical Analysis, Critical Interpretation, and Contemporary Application of the Virtue of Temperance***

Maria Russell Kenney

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a thorough and relevant account of the virtue of temperance, working from within its status as a cardinal virtue in classical and Christian moral thought. With this objective, it undertakes an historical analysis and interpretation of temperance in the work of seven major philosophers and theologians before applying it to the contemporary issue of consumerism.

Of the four cardinal virtues, only temperance has virtually disappeared from common usage. The ‘temperance movements’ of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries left temperance with a highly restricted definition and scope; at present, its principal definition is either ‘abstinence from drinking’ or ‘everything in moderation’. As a result – and despite the resurgence of interest in virtue ethics – temperance is often forgotten or dismissed, as when Peter Geach called it ‘humdrum’ virtue and ‘nothing to get excited about.’

Yet temperance was once a dynamic component of the moral life. For centuries, within both the classical and Christian traditions, temperance engaged the interest of numerous philosophers and theologians. Through an historical survey and critical analysis, this thesis explores the nuanced history of the virtue of temperance in the work of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Wesley. Their portrayals of temperance provide an ideal starting point for any retrieval of the virtue. Within this historical analysis, various interpretive threads begin to emerge – self-control, knowledge, mode, humility, and harmonious order. These five components of temperance are the center of this thesis and its interpretation of the virtue of temperance.

The thesis then applies this new understanding of temperance to the modern issue of consumerism, using it as a lens to examine the tenets and ethos of Western consumer culture. Rather than commonplace and irrelevant, the virtue of temperance emerges again as a vibrant component of contemporary moral discussion.

University of Durham  
Department of Theology

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND  
CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION OF THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE

A thesis

by

MARIA RUSSELL KENNEY

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abbreviations

|               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Aquinas       |   |   |
| ST            | <i>Summa Theologiae</i>                     |   |
| Ambrose       |   |   |
| de off.       | <i>De Officiis</i>                          | <i>On the Duties of the Catholic Clergy</i>     |
| Aristotle     |   |   |
| de an.        | <i>De Anima</i>                             |   |
| Eth.Eud.      | <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>                      |   |
| Meta.         | <i>Metaphysics</i>                          |   |
| Eth.Nic.      | <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>                   |   |
| Augustine     |   |   |
| conf.         | <i>Confessiones</i>                         | <i>Confessions</i>                              |
| b. uita       | <i>De beata uita</i>                        | <i>On the Happy Life</i>                        |
| de bono conj. | <i>De bono coniugale</i>                    | <i>On the Good of Marriage</i>                  |
| cont.         | <i>De continentia</i>                       | <i>On Continence</i>                            |
| ciu.          | <i>De ciuitate Dei</i>                      | <i>City of God</i>                              |
| diu. qu. 83   | <i>De diuresis quaestionibus 83</i>         | <i>On Eighty-Three Different Questions</i>      |
| Gn. litt      | <i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i>                | <i>On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis</i> |
| Gn. adu. Man. | <i>De Genesi aduersus Manicheos</i>         | <i>On Genesis Against the Manichees</i>         |
| lib. arb.     | <i>De libero arbitrio</i>                   | <i>On Free Will</i>                             |
| mor.          | <i>De moribus ecclesiae Catholicae</i>      | <i>On the Morals of the Catholic Church</i>     |
| mus.          | <i>De musica</i>                            | <i>On Music</i>                                 |
| ep.           | <i>Epistulae</i>                            | <i>Letters</i>                                  |
| Jo. eu. tr.   | <i>In Joannis euangelium Tractus</i>        | <i>Tractates on the Gospel of John</i>          |
| ord.          | <i>De ordine</i>                            | <i>On Order</i>                                 |
| retr.         | <i>Retractationes</i>                       | <i>Retractions</i>                              |
| s.            | <i>Sermones</i>                             | <i>Sermons</i>                                  |
| sol.          | <i>Soliloquia</i>                           | <i>Soliloquies</i>                              |
| trin.         | <i>De Trinitate</i>                         | <i>On the Trinity</i>                           |
| uera rel.     | <i>De uera religion</i>                     | <i>On True Religion</i>                         |
| Calvin, John  |   |   |
| Inst.         | <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> |   |
| Comm.         | <i>Commentaries</i>                         |   |



|                   |                    |  |
|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| Cicero            | <i>Disp.</i>       | <i>Tusculan Disputations</i>                       |
|                   | <i>Fin.</i>        | <i>De Finibus</i>                                  |
|                   | <i>Inv.</i>        | <i>De Inventione</i>                               |
|                   | <i>Leg.</i>        | <i>De Legibus</i>                                  |
|                   | <i>Off.</i>        | <i>De Officiis</i>                                 |
| Diogenes Laertius |                    |  |
|                   | D.L.               | <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>               |
| Epictetus         |                    |  |
|                   | <i>Disc.</i>       | <i>Discourses</i>                                  |
| Galen             |                    |  |
|                   | <i>de Plac.</i>    | <i>De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis</i>         |
| Plato             |                    |  |
|                   | <i>Char.</i>       | <i>Charmides</i>                                   |
|                   | <i>Euthd.</i>      | <i>Euthydemus</i>                                  |
|                   | <i>Gorg.</i>       | <i>Gorgias</i>                                     |
|                   | <i>Phdr.</i>       | <i>Phaedrus</i>                                    |
|                   | <i>Phdo.</i>       | <i>Phaedo</i>                                      |
|                   | <i>Phil.</i>       | <i>Philebus</i>                                    |
|                   | <i>Prot.</i>       | <i>Protagoras</i>                                  |
|                   | <i>Rep.</i>        | <i>Republic</i>                                    |
|                   | <i>Soph.</i>       | <i>Sophist</i>                                     |
|                   | <i>Stsm.</i>       | <i>Statesman</i>                                   |
|                   | <i>Tim.</i>        | <i>Timaeus</i>                                     |
| Plutarch          |                    |  |
|                   | <i>Stoic. rep.</i> | <i>De Stoicorum Repugnantiis</i>                   |
|                   | <i>Virt mor</i>    | <i>De Virtute Morali</i>                           |
| SVF               |                    | <i>Stoicorum Veratum Fragmenta</i>                 |
| Stobaeus          |                    |  |
|                   | <i>Ecl.</i>        | <i>Eclogae</i>                                     |
| TDNT              |                    | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> |
| Wesley, John      |                    |  |
|                   | <i>Acct.</i>       | <i>A Plain Account of Christian Perfection</i>     |
|                   | <i>Expl.</i>       | <i>Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament</i>    |
|                   | <i>Jrnl.</i>       | <i>The Journals of John Wesley</i>                 |
|                   | <i>Princ.</i>      | <i>Principles of Methodism</i>                     |
|                   | <i>Serm.</i>       | <i>John Wesley's Standard Sermons</i>              |

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## Chapter One

### The Virtue of Temperance: An Introduction

#### 1.1 Temperance: An Introduction

Of the four cardinal virtues – temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom – temperance is the only one where neither the word nor the concept remains an active part of contemporary moral discourse. The *virtue* of temperance has all but disappeared from the ethical landscape, with over ninety percent of the results of an internet search of ‘temperance’ referencing the Temperance Movement in some fashion. What little attention it does receive often reinforces this association; in *The New Temperance*, sociologist David Wagner names the rising emphasis upon regulation of personal morality ‘the New Temperance.’<sup>1</sup> Identifying the ‘ideology, social movement, and strategy’ of the Temperance Movements both old and new, Wagner decries the hypervigilant and pervasive concern with immorality as an underhand means of social control, which distract the public from more genuine and pressing social issues.<sup>2</sup>

However, concerns over the ‘New Temperance’ are not the only criticisms of the virtue, nor are these concerns unrepresented in philosophical discourse. Feminist philosopher Mary Daly calls traditional temperance ‘notoriously tedious’, a ‘timid and/or fiercely fanatic but always grim insistence upon moderation, restraint, and self-control.’<sup>3</sup> Ecotheologian Louke van Wensveen notes its association with such dour qualities as ‘small-mindishness, prudishness, preachiness, missionary zeal, and

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<sup>1</sup> David Wagner, *The New Temperance: The American Obsession with Sin and Vice* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997). He continues: ‘Although I mean to define *temperance* as being more than a movement against alcohol, there are persuasive reasons to recall this earlier movement’ (5).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Daly, *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 1984), 223.

especially lack of joy.’<sup>4</sup> Even among the supporters of virtue ethics, temperance is often overlooked. Howard Curzer notes the ‘surprising neglect’ of Aristotle’s account of temperance amidst the renewed interest in virtue ethics.<sup>5</sup> Jesuit theologian Josef Pieper notes dolefully that the meaning of temperance ‘has dwindled miserably to the crude significance of “temperateness in eating and drinking”.’<sup>6</sup> And in a recent series in Catholic moral thought, a text on virtue contained essays on charity, justice, prudence, courage, and humility.<sup>7</sup> When I enquired about the absence of temperance, the editors replied that they ‘agonized over leaving out temperance’ but observing the page limit led to ‘some tough decisions.’<sup>8</sup> Their decision, while understandable, demonstrates a lacuna in both the specific literature on virtue and the larger moral conversations. As the ‘the least glamorous’ and ‘least endorsed’ of the group of arguably central virtues, temperance continues to be damned with faint praise.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the commonly cited critique of temperance is that of Peter Geach, who calls temperance ‘a humdrum, commonsensical matter’ and ‘nothing to get excited about.’<sup>10</sup> An attribute neither of God nor of the ‘holy angels’, temperance is, at best, a sub-virtue preparing the way for more important moral goals. Indeed, it cannot arouse undue enthusiasm, nor should it; as this would lead one into an ‘intemperate asceticism’, a ‘morbid self-hatred’ instead of an Aristotelian mean. Even the objects of temperance – food and alcohol – are themselves too dull to elicit a

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<sup>4</sup> Louke van Wensveen, ‘Attunement: An Ecological Spin on the Virtue of Temperance’, *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8:2 (2001), 67-79 (71).

<sup>5</sup> Howard Curzer, *Aristotle and the Virtues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>6</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame, 1966), 145.

<sup>7</sup> Charles E. Curran and Lisa A. Fullam, *Virtue, Readings in Moral Theology 16* (New York: Paulist Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Personal email correspondence with Charles Curran. He concluded, ‘We do not have anything against temperance!’

<sup>9</sup> Ryan M. Niemiec and Jeremy Clyman, ‘Temperance: The Quiet Virtue Finds a Home’, *PsycCritiques* 54 (2009); <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=ssTKEveJsrg%3D&portalid=0>

<sup>10</sup> Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 132. The bulk of this paragraph is drawn from Geach, 131-9. Harry Clor, *On Moderation: Defending an Ancient Virtue in a Modern World* (Waco TX: Baylor Press, 2008) makes a similar observation about moderation, the cousin of temperance; see Clor, 7.

passionate response. Moderate versions of gluttony or drunkenness are ‘only a fault, not a vice’ and therefore of no particular concern. Geach does find chastity and virginity worthy of serious consideration (which, along with suicide, comprise the bulk of the chapter), although he places them outside the proper realm of temperance.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while ostensibly engaging the topic of ‘temperance’, Geach essentially dismisses the virtue as irrelevant to significant moral concerns.<sup>12</sup>

Yet closer examination reveals pockets of interest and encouragement. Pieper laments the present devaluation of temperance precisely because it conceals its fullness.<sup>13</sup> Temperance is an ‘ambivalent’ virtue, notes Catholic theologian Richard White, because the ‘impoverishment’ of its present meaning contradicts an intuitive inclination against wanton self-abandon.<sup>14</sup> Even after acknowledging its many negative associations, van Wensveen still identifies temperance as an important environmental virtue.<sup>15</sup> And moral theologian Margaret Atkins argues for the relevance of the ‘forgotten’ and ‘neglected’ virtue.<sup>16</sup> In the words of Monty Python, this classic virtue is not dead yet. The crucial question, however, is whether temperance can experience its own renaissance within the renewal of virtue ethics and theory. Any attempt at reclamation should begin with an assessment of the virtue’s location within the current moral landscape.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Geach, this is because the uniquely generative nature of the sexual appetites makes them much more serious than the appetites for food or alcohol (133).

<sup>12</sup> To my view, Geach’s chapter title belies the content, as temperance disappears for the last seventeen of nineteen pages, and the chapter focuses almost entirely on sexual morality and suicide. Thus, I find Geach’s analysis to be eisegetical rather than exegetical, and less than reliable as an indication of the import of temperance; see 7.3.1 below. However, his critique has had lasting impact and cannot be lightly dismissed.

<sup>13</sup> Pieper, 145.

<sup>14</sup> Richard White, *Radical Virtues: Moral Wisdom and the Ethics of Contemporary Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 58.

<sup>15</sup> Van Wensveen, ‘Attunement’, 67-79. See also Peter Wenz, ‘Synergistic Environmental Virtues: Consumerism and Human Flourishing,’ in *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, ed. Ronald D. Sandler and Philip Cafaro (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) 197-214; and Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 187.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Atkins, ‘Can We Ever Be Satisfied?’, *Priests and People* 12:2 (1998), 45-9 (45).

## **1.2 Two Primary Meanings**

In his dialogues on particular virtues, Socrates often begins with the definition already present within Athenian culture. Beginning with common understanding and opinion, he explores the adequacy of the prevailing definition before considering possible alternatives.<sup>17</sup> Following this model, this study considers the two primary meanings of modern-day temperance: abstinence from alcohol and ‘everything in moderation.’ We begin with an examination of the temperance movement, which has given temperance its most enduring popular characterization – abstinence from alcohol. How did a once-cardinal virtue receive such a negative and enduring label?

### **1.2.1 Christian Temperance Unions (the ‘Temperance Movement’)**

The Christian Temperance Unions (henceforth referred to collectively as the ‘temperance movement’) were a central feature of late nineteenth and early twentieth century moral life. Arising from a constellation of religious, secular, and economic concerns, the temperance movement viewed alcohol as hazardous to physical, spiritual, and societal health. With recommendations ranging from moderation in consumption to complete abstinence, the temperance movement sought to enforce their convictions in religious, social, and legislative arenas.

#### **1.2.1.1 Societal Concerns of the Temperance Movement**

For many, the temperance movement was less a movement *against* alcohol itself than a movement *for* the many things alcohol was seen to destroy. Amidst concerns among industrialists facing absenteeism and low work productivity, the movement found roots in the ‘market revolution’, which promoted such philosophical goods as

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<sup>17</sup> See *Laches* and *Charmides* as two examples of this methodology.



rationality, sobriety, and order.<sup>18</sup> In its connections to the reform of such social evils as slavery, malnutrition, neglect, and work-related abuses, the temperance movement worked in concert with sabbatarianism, feminism, and the women's suffrage movement. Suffragists, in particular, called the temperance movement a 'benevolent feminism' for the concern it displayed towards women and children.<sup>19</sup> Daly names temperance activist Carry Nation as a refutation of the characterizations of the Women's Christian Temperance Union as 'timid' and 'dreary', a series of 'fixations' by 'small-souled women.' Rather, they were crusaders who sought freedom for families from the oppression of alcoholism.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, a central motivation for both the American and British temperance movements was the amount of sheer misery traceable, directly or indirectly, to alcohol consumption.<sup>21</sup> In particular, large numbers of women and children suffered from alcohol-related abuse. In the book *Temperance Sermons*, 'The Saloon and the Child' emphasizes the importance of children and their vulnerability to Christ as it contrasts the tavern with the home, the school, and the church.<sup>22</sup> Alcohol abuse (which, in the opinion of many, was alcohol consumption writ large) stood to undo the progress made in various aspects of child welfare and the easing of the burdens of the poor more generally.

Yet concern for the poor and working-class often arose from a deeper moral distress. Underlying much of the drive behind the temperance movement was a wide-

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago IL: The American Ways Series, 1998), 17.

<sup>19</sup> See Janet Giele, *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Daly, 285.

<sup>21</sup> Even anti-abstinence positions admit the attendant evils of drunkenness: E.A. Wasson, *Religion and Drink* (New York: Burr Printing House, 1914), 266.

<sup>22</sup> *Temperance Sermons by Various Authors*, compiled by The Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917).

ranging concern for social and political stability.<sup>23</sup> The new paradigm of post-Revolutionary America, with its separation of church and state and emphasis upon civil and religious liberties, caused many New Englanders to worry that a ‘spiritual free-for-all had replaced cosmic order’.<sup>24</sup> This ‘reform cosmology’ drew the attention of temperance reformers, among others, to issues of restoring social order and stability. The religious passion felt by Benjamin Rush, a physician and early American statesman, directly influenced an emerging ‘Enlightenment Christian reform vision of individual, society, and cosmos’ that sought to restore order to all areas of human life.<sup>25</sup> This indicates another central motivation of the temperance movements: religious conviction.

### **1.2.1.2 Religious Foundations of the Temperance Movement**

The American temperance movement was decidedly religious in nature, particularly within the churches of Puritan derivation – Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Methodists.<sup>26</sup> Moving from moral models of intoxication – drunkenness as *vice* – towards more medical and social models – drunkenness as *disease* – pushed many Protestant churches towards teetotaling positions.<sup>27</sup> However, evangelicalism maintained a solid opposition to drunkenness (with a particular focus upon distilled ‘spirits’) that predated the official temperance movement. Believing that increased

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<sup>23</sup> Robert H. Wiebe argues that a ‘search for order’ characterizes the period otherwise known both as the ‘Progressive Era’ and the ‘Gilded Age’; see *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

<sup>24</sup> Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and Religious Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-3.

<sup>26</sup> A good introduction to the American temperance movement is Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum*. For a comprehensive source on the temperance movement in Great Britain, see Brian Harrison’s *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994). For a focus on the changing attitudes towards alcohol addiction, particularly within theology and religious communities, see Christopher C. H. Cook, *Alcohol, Addiction, and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Cook, 77-8, citing Benjamin Rush’s influential characterization of drunkenness as disease (78).

physical health would improve spiritual openness, evangelicals viewed alcohol as a stumbling block to reception of the gospel, which left people ‘befuddled in mind and degraded in spirit.’<sup>28</sup> Thus, sobriety was preached as a necessary prerequisite to true conversion.<sup>29</sup> Because early evangelicals focused more on supporting humanitarian causes than prosecuting vice, the temperance movement was an area where they could address a genuine public need while remaining embedded in the life of faith.<sup>30</sup>

The early Methodist Church took a serious view of alcohol consumption. For numerous reasons, Wesley was unreservedly against ‘dram-drinking.’<sup>31</sup> In his ‘Thoughts Upon the Present Scarcity of Provisions,’ Wesley connects the scarcity and expense of foodstuffs in England to the use of corn and other grains in distilling (I.3).<sup>32</sup> Wesley’s opposition to alcohol consumption was also based in his commitment to the purposes of fasting, thrift, and ‘expediency’, as he notes in his journal: ‘And I think the poor themselves ought to be questioned with regard to drinking tea and beer. For I cannot think it right for them to indulge themselves in those things which I refrain from to help them’ (*Jrnl.* 11/20/1767). In his ‘General Rules’ of 1743 for societies in both Great Britain and the United States, John Wesley explicitly prohibits ‘drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in a case of extreme necessity.’<sup>33</sup> Directions were given to the Band-Societies on December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1744, ‘to take no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind,

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<sup>28</sup> See T.N. Soper, *Green Bluff: A Temperance Story* (Boston MA: Rand, Avery and Co., 1874), 64.

<sup>29</sup> Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Harrison, *Victorians*, 93-4. On the importance of social holiness to early evangelicals, see Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Wasson, 172.

<sup>32</sup> John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, vol.6, ed. J. Emory and B. Waugh (New York: 1831), 274-7.

<sup>33</sup> E.L. Eaton, *Winning the Fight against Drink* (New York/Cincinnati Methodist Book Concerns, 1921), 25.

unless prescribed by a physician.’<sup>34</sup> These rules were adopted by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1798 in the *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, after which their General Conference ‘added precept to example’ by banning members from participation in the liquor business.<sup>35</sup>

Here the Methodist societies laid the groundwork for the nascent temperance movement.<sup>36</sup> However, the Methodist position stopped short on insistence upon total abstinence. Although the Temperance Unions labeled Wesley ‘a total abstainer’,<sup>37</sup> and while he was consistently opposed to ‘dram-drinking’ and distilled liquors, Wesley himself drank beer and wine on occasion; he comments on a periodic abstinence from ‘the use of flesh and wine’, which he later resumed (*Jrnl.* 10/20/1735). He once questioned why someone should ‘condemn wine *toto genere*, which is one of the noblest cordials in nature!’ (*Jrnl.* 12/9/1771). The Moravians, under whom John Wesley was converted, believed that ‘drink is Christian’ and even operated a brewery in France.<sup>38</sup> Francis Asbury, Wesley’s onetime assistant and co-superintendent, preached on the virtues of moderation: ‘We must not indulge in the unlawful use of lawful things: it is lawful to eat, but not to gluttony; it is lawful to drink, but not to drunkenness.’<sup>39</sup>

Other denominations shared Wesley’s reservations concerning total abstinence. The Lutheran, Episcopal, and Catholic churches viewed total abstinence as ‘a matter of conscience’ and focused instead upon the promotion of moderation. In

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in American*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Philadelphia PA: Henry Tuckniss (printer) 1798), 171.

<sup>35</sup> Eaton, 27-8.

<sup>36</sup> Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1838), 134-46.

<sup>37</sup> Walter W. Spooner (ed.), *The Cyclopædia of Temperance and Prohibition: A Reference Book of Facts, Statistics, and General Information on All Phases of the Drink Question, the Temperance Movement and the Prohibition Agitation* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1891), 650.

<sup>38</sup> Wasson, 190.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 179. Christopher Cook helpfully notes that the term ‘moderation’ in the temperance movements generally referenced both quantity and concentration (beer and wine were of less concern than distilled spirits) of alcohol consumed (81 n.30).

this, they saw themselves as ‘following the old teaching, and the old way, of Church and Bible, of saint and seer and Savior, the way of self-control and sobriety.’<sup>40</sup> This was an important acknowledgment of the mixed history towards the consumption of alcohol within the Christian tradition. And although deeply inspired by the American temperance societies, even John Edgar – Presbyterian minister, professor of theology, and one of the founders of the British temperance movement – never abandoned the moderation position in favor of total abstinence.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the Second Great Awakening – with its foundations in postmillennialism and its emphasis on personal holiness moving onwards to perfection – laid the groundwork for a push towards total abstinence. The temperance movement thus gradually evolved from a call to moderation in all drink, to abstinence from distilled liquor and moderation in beer and wine, to total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Indeed, the conflation of ‘temperance’ and ‘abstinence’ still appears on the official website of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which cites Xenophon as their authority: ‘WCTU members choose total abstinence from all alcohol as their life style and they adopted this definition of temperance: Temperance may be defined as: moderation in all things healthful; total abstinence from all things harmful.’<sup>42</sup> Their use of a classical text leads to a consideration of the sources and authorities employed by the temperance movements.

### **1.2.1.3 Sources Employed by the Temperance Movement**

The temperance movement employed numerous historical authorities, both classical and Christian, in support of its arguments. However, advocates for total abstinence

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<sup>40</sup> Wasson, 185-6.

<sup>41</sup> Cook, 81.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.wctu.org>. This appears to be a paraphrase of Xenophon’s thought on temperance (particularly *Memorabilia* I.5 and IV.5), rather than an exact quote.

often incorporated a variety of viewpoints into their more severe position. In ‘Historical and Philosophical Notes on Intemperance,’ the pro-abstinence *Cyclopaedia of Temperance and Prohibition* admits that both ‘temperance’ and ‘moderation’ are functionally imprecise, as ‘that which is (or is supposed to be) moderation for one drinker may be excess for another.’ Still, it maintains that ‘the best temperance is purity’, citing Homer, Herodotus, Xenophon, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Church Fathers to bolster its call for abstinence.<sup>43</sup> It employs Aristotle’s connection between abstinence and temperance (*Eth.Nic.* II.8); and it cites both Xenophon (*Mem.* I.5 and IV.5) and Aquinas on the importance of abstaining from ‘things contrary to soundness or a good condition of life’ (*ST* q.141, art.6). It concludes: ‘It is by virtue of good authority, therefore, that the word ‘temperance,’ as specifically used at this day, is generally recognized as an equivalent for “total abstinence”’.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the abstinence position claimed strong historical support.

However, there is also significant engagement with classical philosophy and theology in the writings of those who favored moderation over strict abstinence. *The Teaching of Temperance and Self-Control* acknowledges the reality of alcohol abuse and the need for self-control in its consumption; however, its larger goal is ‘to awaken the interest of teachers in a great moral ideal, and to encourage the habit of reflection on moral ideas.’<sup>45</sup> Inspiration for true temperance should be positive, not negative: ‘Self-mastery is a noble ideal, essential to the good life.’<sup>46</sup> If intemperance is ‘the complete mastery of Man by a base appetite’, then the solution is not the complete suppression of this appetite, but the elevation and restoration of reason. ‘Happy Day,’

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<sup>43</sup> Spooner, 625.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> E.C. Urwin, *Teaching Temperance and Self-Control* (London: The National Sunday School Union, 1933), vi.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

declared Abraham Lincoln, ‘when, all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, *mind*, all conquering *mind*, shall live and move the monarch of the world.’<sup>47</sup>

Some arguments were Platonic in nature, referencing self-mastery and internal management. The adult should ‘observe and govern himself’; men and women are ‘free and responsible beings, capable of “self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control”.’<sup>48</sup> Others sound more Aristotelian: children should be raised ‘so that their appetites shall be normal, that they shall not desire excess, but shun it “instinctively” – if you like that word – without the need of conscious self-restraint.’<sup>49</sup> And the pro-moderation text *Religion and Drink* engages the gospel of Matthew in a surprisingly Stoic manner; citing Matt. 10.16 (‘Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves’), the author says, ‘This wisdom would enable them to choose between the evil and the good.’<sup>50</sup> This echoes Zeno’s definition of temperance as wisdom in choosing (*SVF* I.201).<sup>51</sup> Classically, the moderation position appears to have significant support for its position as well.

Thus, the proponents of both the abstinence and moderation positions viewed themselves as residing within the larger moral tradition of the virtue of temperance, while also claiming biblical and church support. Without a closer examination of the sources themselves, however, it is difficult to adjudicate between their claims. And while both positions remain technically present in the contemporary moral lexicon, the abstinence position has clearly had a more enduring influence.<sup>52</sup> This echoes

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<sup>47</sup> Pegram, 36.

<sup>48</sup> M. Monohan (ed.), *A Text-Book of True Temperance* (New York: United States Brewers’ Association, 1909), 150.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>50</sup> Wasson, 269.

<sup>51</sup> See 3.2.4.1 below.

<sup>52</sup> See Wagner, 1-19. While he does acknowledge the loss of the ‘moderation’ subtext of temperance within these movements, inasmuch as they promoted abstinence over moderation (19), Wagner still appropriates the more extreme version.

Mark Twain's characterization of Prohibition as an 'intemperate temperance.'<sup>53</sup> Even current translations of classic ethical texts may, for this reason, avoid the term 'temperance' itself. When I enquired why a noted translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* uses 'moderation' instead of 'temperance', the author stated her intention to avoid 'the association that "temperance" has with abstention from alcohol, as in "Temperance societies".'<sup>54</sup> Thus 'moderation' as a term appears less burdened with negative and restrictive associations than 'temperance', and this appears better able to convey the essence of the virtue in question.<sup>55</sup> Is moderation a significant improvement, either as a term or as a position?

### 1.2.2 Moderation

"Everything in moderation," or so the saying goes,' remarks one commentator.<sup>56</sup> The idea (and perhaps the ideal) of 'everything in moderation' has its roots in the Delphic oracle, where the axiom 'Nothing in Excess' hung above the entrance. It is commonly associated with the Aristotelian mean of virtue – often referred to as the 'Golden Mean' – wherein virtue lies in avoiding the extremes of excess and deficiency. As a moral axiom, 'everything in moderation' has the advantage of being commonsensical. This in itself is not wholly negative, as it makes sense to generally avoid extremes of behavior and mood. Indeed, Jacques Maritain calls Aristotelian Thomism the 'golden mean' in the philosophical relationship between intellect and

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<sup>53</sup> Albert Paine (ed.) *Mark Twain's Notebook*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), 311.

<sup>54</sup> Personal email correspondence with Sarah Broadie.

<sup>55</sup> An interesting exception is Robert C. Roberts, who calls temperance 'a nearly perfect word' for this virtue, drawing upon the etymology of 'to temper' ('Temperance', in *Virtues and Their Vices*, eds. Kevin Timpe and Craig Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 93-111 (93). Nicholas Austin also states that the 'historical plasticity' of the term *temperance* 'is suggestive that its use can be redeemed'; see Nicholas O. Austin, *Thomas Aquinas on the Four Causes of Temperance* (PhD dissertation, Boston College, 2010), 324.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher Peterson and Martin P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38.



common sense.<sup>57</sup> More recently, moderation has been rediscovered as an important component of philosophical, political, and personal engagement.<sup>58</sup> Clearly part of the classical moral heritage, it should not be dismissed lightly.

Moderation is, in recent years, a common definition of temperance, with both positive and negative connotations.<sup>59</sup> While this may appear benign, reading moderation *qua* virtue in this manner may result in a tepid mediocrity that contributes little of practical value to moral enquiry.

Moderation of a sort thus plays a role as contributor to human flourishing—a secondary and derivative role. But when severed from the passionate sources of inspiration, as nowadays it always is, the Aristotelianism of morals can only result in a toning down of the affects to a harmless, apathetic mean that prepares the way for ‘the last man.’<sup>60</sup>

Calling moderation ‘practically equivalent’ to temperance, Richard White echoes these concerns when he states: ‘We want to be small, Nietzsche might say; we are afraid of anything exceptional or extreme, and so we praise temperance because we are mediocre and comfortable only with the virtues of mediocrity.’<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Josef Pieper finds the current understanding of moderation an ‘emasculated concept’ that arises ‘when the love of truth or some other generous impulse threatens to take an extreme risk.’<sup>62</sup> As a definition of temperance, moderation stands in stark contrast to ‘the classic prototype of the fourth cardinal virtue.’ Moreover, it displays nothing of the love of God, the ‘fountainhead of the virtues... that knows neither mean nor measure.’<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* [1932] (Westminster MD: Christian Classics, Inc., 1989), 89-90.

<sup>58</sup> See Clor and James S. Hans, *The Golden Mean* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).

<sup>59</sup> This appears in scholarly translations including Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) as well as more popular works such as Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Clor, 51.

<sup>61</sup> White, 45-6.

<sup>62</sup> Pieper, 145.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-6.

It is difficult to countenance the demotion of a cardinal virtue to a subordinate and unoriginal trait of character; but alongside the stringency of the teetotalers, a ‘moderate’ moderation may seem the lesser of the two evils. Thus, temperance is caught between two rather unappealing alternatives: total and repressive abstinence from alcohol or ineffective and uninspiring moderation. The next question is whether this impact is an inevitable result of the temperance movement and a lack of ethical interest, or whether the virtue has other, more constructive possibilities. This study now turns to more recent work on the virtue of temperance, both to assess the impact of the temperance movement on current scholarly understandings of temperance and to discern trends in moral thought on the virtue’s meaning and significance.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

Sources dealing with temperance include several monographs and larger theological and/or philosophical works on virtue or character. Along with these, this study will consider several works within psychology, sociology, and more popular writing. Temperance, while not making headlines in either popular or academic writing, does have a small but significant presence.

#### **1.3.1 Monographs on Temperance**

Regarding classical temperance, the standard is undoubtedly Helen North’s *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature*, which remains the most comprehensive account of ‘classical temperance’, both in breadth and depth.<sup>64</sup> It considers the position of temperance in the pre-Socratic Heroic and

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<sup>64</sup> Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1966). Another very thorough account of *sōphrosynē* in Greek literature and thought, spanning the time from Homer to Plato and focused on semantics, is Adriaan Rademaker, *Sōphrosynē and the Rhetoric of Self-Restraint* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Archaic periods; its location within the newly established, Platonic tetrad of cardinal virtues; its development in the works of Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Neoplatonists; and its transition into and appropriation by both Roman culture and early Christian morality. Her narrative possesses tremendous strengths, particularly when read against recent accounts: it fully elucidates the richness and variety especially in Plato and in the variety of possible translations; it pays close attention to both the concept of temperance and the variety of the associated terms; and it acknowledges and engages the complexity of the virtue's development, particularly as temperance makes its transition into the Roman and Christian worlds. It is foundational for any competent analysis of temperance. Its primary weakness, which is less a criticism than an acknowledgement of the scope of the author's intent, is the brevity of its conclusion. North offers a vital and compelling interpretation of temperance in Greek thought and language, opening the door for someone to continue both the study and the story of temperance.

An excellent complement to North's comprehensive treatment of classical and patristic temperance is Josef Pieper's *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, an extended discussion of Thomistic temperance. Roughly following the virtue's treatment in the *Summa Theologiae*, Pieper rejects the halfhearted depictions of temperance as fear of exuberance or excess. Noting the richness and constructive nature of the Greek *sōphrosynē* and the Latin *temperantia*, Pieper characterizes the heart of temperance as the unification and integration of diverse parts. This arises from a posture of 'selfless self-preservation' wherein the 'single self' is purified and made whole.<sup>65</sup> Following Aquinas in discussing fasting, humility, curiosity, and the moderation of wrath, he sees the preservation of chastity as 'the primordial form of the discipline of

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<sup>65</sup> Pieper, 147-52; see also 205.

temperateness.’<sup>66</sup> Despite his creative analysis and interpretation of Aquinas’s text, Pieper warns against any forced originality. Instead, he looks to ‘the wisdom of the ancients’ which provides a ‘truly inexhaustible contemporaneity.’<sup>67</sup> While Pieper’s main limitation, for this thesis, is his singular focus upon Aquinas, his detailed engagement with the material is absorbing and persuasive.

The two most comprehensive current accounts differ in their topics and approach. In his doctoral thesis ‘The Four Causes of Temperance’, Nicholas Austin completes an exegetical analysis of several Thomistic texts to construct Aquinas’s understanding of temperance via its ‘four causes’ (formal, material, final, and efficient). Austin provides a meticulous account of Thomistic thought on the causes of virtue in general and temperance in particular; he concludes that Thomistic temperance is characterized by ‘a twofold mode of restraint and positive channeling’ of desires.<sup>68</sup> He depicts temperance and its actions as positive forces in the moral life and concludes by relating seven ‘attractive marks’ of Thomistic temperance.<sup>69</sup> The primary weakness in Austin’s work, similar to that of Pieper, lies more in the scope of the work than in its quality or internal adequacy; because Austin confines himself to a single (albeit very influential) historical figure, he rather limits the possible resources for the retrieval and application of temperance. Nevertheless, Austin’s thesis adds to the current literature both a serious account of temperance as constructed by one particular historical figure and an engaged interpretation of this account.

The second recent work on temperance is Mark Carr’s *Passionate Deliberation: Emotion, Temperance, and the Care Ethic in Clinical Moral*

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<sup>66</sup> Pieper, 151 (citing *ST* II-II.141.4 in note 8). This counters Geach’s position that chastity is erroneously attached to temperance (Geach, 132).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>68</sup> Austin, 320.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

*Deliberation*.<sup>70</sup> Drawing from essentially the same sources as this thesis, Carr identifies six primary meanings, or ‘interpretive threads’ within temperance across its many historical treatments. The ‘broad’ understandings include *sophrosyne*, moderation, *temperantia* as mixing, and *decorum* or social propriety; the ‘narrow’ treatments include self-restraint, and self-control. Carr then proposes a ‘normative account of temperance’ that does not attempt to consolidate or strictly prioritize these interpretive threads, excepting that (1) self-restraint must not take priority and (2) *sophrosyne* is particularly beneficial for the kinds of ‘psychological temperance’ connected to the care ethic he promotes.<sup>71</sup> Calling temperance ‘self-management of both sensate and intellectual desires’,<sup>72</sup> Carr concludes by applying this normative account to the incorporation of emotion in the deliberative clinical setting, offering an alternative to the ‘dispassionate rationalism’ and reviving the medical code of *aequanimas* or imperturbability.<sup>73</sup> Carr, as opposed to Austin and Pieper, offers both the broad recovery found in North and the focused application lacking in North and Austin. However, he limits the deeper historical and exegetical work on the virtue itself, splitting his efforts between examinations of temperance, emotion, and clinical decision-making. Thus, his account of temperance as a virtue is not as fully developed as one might like.

North, Austin, and Carr, in different ways and through their different approaches, resemble the methods and aims of this thesis. North offers a striking alternative concept to both temperance as abstinence and ‘everything in moderation’, but her account concludes too early in the historical journey to stand alone in any retrieval of temperance. However, in its historical structure, its eye for significant

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<sup>70</sup> Mark Carr, *Passionate Deliberation: Emotion, Temperance, and the Care Ethic in Clinical Moral Deliberation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-58.

developments, and its attention to both terminological and conceptual associations of temperance, North's work is an excellent model for any attempt to rediscover temperance.<sup>74</sup> Both Austin and Carr make substantial contributions to the discussion of temperance, offering an alternative to Geach's dismissive interpretation of temperance.<sup>75</sup> In this, I believe they both succeed. However, each contribution stops short of what this study shall argue is a wide-ranging yet exegetically competent treatment of the virtue. Austin's work is similar in approach and methodology to Part II of this thesis in its emphasis on historical and textual analysis; but whereas Austin examines only Aquinas, this study considers seven schools of philosophical and theological thought. This, admittedly, allows for less depth within each analysis but adds to the study's breadth of scope. Carr's work more closely resembles Part III of the present work; however, Carr formulates his six 'interpretive threads' apart from an intentional study of the history of the virtue of temperance.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, this thesis derives its interpretive hermeneutic from (and places the bulk of its work within) a detailed examination of the source texts, in conversation with the relevant secondary materials. It discerns the major interpretive threads *after* and *within* a careful diachronic study of the history of temperance. Thus, this thesis attempts to incorporate the best of the approaches of North, Austin, and Carr, engaging critically with the historical texts, the interpretive possibilities, and the possible applications.

### 1.3.2 Other Treatments

While not possessing the monograph status of the works just discussed, temperance does appear in several comprehensive works on virtue and character. These

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<sup>74</sup> See 1.4.2.3 below.

<sup>75</sup> Austin's refutation is indirect (1, 7), while Carr's rebuttal is explicit (157).

<sup>76</sup> See 1.4.2 below for an outline of this thesis and its chapters.

treatments include philosophical, theological, and psychological explorations of virtue, adding to the discourse on temperance in small but meaningful ways.

### 1.3.2.1 Philosophical and Theological Accounts

The majority of the recent philosophical accounts are Aristotelian. Charles Young provides a helpful distinction between intellectual temperance (typically understood as self-knowledge) and moral temperance (typically understood as self-control).<sup>77</sup> He also centers his account on the importance of human animality for truly human living. Thus, intemperance is more than merely ‘overdoing it’; it is relating wrongly to our animality. Howard Curzer’s work with Aristotelian temperance addresses several internal ‘tensions’ wherein Aristotle’s account contradicts common sense and even ‘[his] own architectonic.’<sup>78</sup> Whereas Aristotle stipulates that intemperance requires violating all the parameters of temperance, Curzer argues that violating a single parameter is sufficiently vicious; and Curzer finds Aristotle’s limitation of the sphere of temperance to the activities of the sense of touch unduly restrictive. Curzer also advocates expanding the sphere of temperance beyond the strictly physical appetites for food, alcohol, and sexual relations. More recently, Robert Roberts provides a very informative account of the relationship between temperance and rationality, arguing that appetites become temperate by incorporating ‘concerned understandings’ into their patterns of choices.<sup>79</sup>

Treatments of Platonic ‘temperance’ have focused almost exclusively upon the *sōphrosynē* of the *Charmides*.<sup>80</sup> These accounts consider the semantics of the term *sōphrosynē*, the role of knowledge (particularly self-knowledge) in Athenian

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<sup>77</sup> Charles M. Young, ‘Aristotle on Temperance’, in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy IV*, eds. John P. Anton and Anthony Preus (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 107-25 (120-1).

<sup>78</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 65.

<sup>79</sup> Roberts, 93-111.

<sup>80</sup> Two exceptions are North and Rademaker.

morality;<sup>81</sup> the relationship between knowledge, ignorance, and wisdom;<sup>82</sup> and the particularities and function of the text itself.<sup>83</sup> While each adds richness to the general understanding of temperance, none substantially enhance its formulation. Likewise, there is no recent philosophical discussion about temperance across the Platonic corpus, or among the Stoics or other Hellenistic philosophical systems.

Similarly, most current theological accounts that specifically address temperance are Thomistic. Jean Porter describes temperance as an ‘affective virtue’ plausibly translated as ‘self-restraint’ that brings nonrational desire into a more fully realized cognitive relationship with both rationality and the will.<sup>84</sup> Because it is agent-based and therefore somewhat relative to the individual, temperance, like courage, has a special relationship to practical wisdom. Moreover, it is ‘perennial’ in that it is required for crafting and maintaining the life of virtue, and therefore appears on a continuing basis.<sup>85</sup> Diana Cates’ chapter in *The Ethics of Aquinas* is a detailed and nicely technical account, focusing on exposition rather than application. Offering a clear and thorough exposition of temperance in the *Summa*, Cates gives attention to such underlying issues as the rule, standard, and central elements of temperance.<sup>86</sup> Although lacking any treatment of the ‘potential’ parts of temperance (humility, continence, modesty, and curiosity), her account is comprehensive and instructive. William Mattison takes a more broadly Thomistic approach in characterizing

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<sup>81</sup> Susan D. Collins, ‘*Sōphrosynē*: Moderation and Self-Knowledge: An Interpretation of Plato’s *Charmides*.’ (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1987).

<sup>82</sup> Alan Pichanick, *The Virtue of the Soul and the Limits of Human Understanding: The Search for Sophrosune in Plato’s Charmides* (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2005).

<sup>83</sup> N. van der Ben, *The Charmides of Plato: Problems and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner Publishing Co., 1985); and Walter T. Schmid, *Plato’s Charmides and the Socratic Ideal of Rationality* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

<sup>84</sup> Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

<sup>85</sup> Jean Porter, ‘Perennial and Timely Virtues: Practical Wisdom, Courage and Temperance’, in *Changing Values and Virtues*, eds. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1987), 60-8.

<sup>86</sup> Diana Fritz Cates, ‘The Virtue of Temperance’, in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 321-39.



temperance as ‘living a passionate moral life’, calling temperance ‘relatively straightforward’ and prototypical for examining how desires (‘emotions or feelings or passions’) may be integrated into the moral life.<sup>87</sup> However, with his primary focus on the nature of emotions and their role in the moral life, he actually says very little about temperance itself.

### 1.3.2.2 Other Contemporary Accounts

Three recent, slightly more popular accounts provide more expansive views of the virtue. In *Pagan Virtues*, John Casey takes a broad and inclusive view of temperance, including emotion, sloth, ordered love, sensuality, cruelty, and power within its sphere.<sup>88</sup> Working primarily with Aristotle and Aquinas, Casey associates temperance with humility born of objectivity and grace, beauty born of well-ordered living, and the difference between sensuousness and carnality. Casey strongly associates temperance with the discipline of self-will; thus, the temperate person is ‘tempered’ and ‘chastened.’<sup>89</sup> André Comte-Sponville also draws broadly from the philosophical tradition to present a positive and compelling account of temperance.<sup>90</sup> Temperance is ‘not sadness, impotence, or asceticism’; it is enjoying *better*, not enjoying *less*.<sup>91</sup> In mastering our pleasures, we experience them as ‘purer for being freer, more joyful, more serene.’<sup>92</sup> Through temperance, we learn to respect human limits, not surpass them, working companionably with common sense.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> William C. Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 75-94.

<sup>88</sup> John Casey, *Pagan Virtues: An Essay in Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 104-43.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-3.

<sup>90</sup> André Comte-Sponville, *A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Finally, psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin P. Seligman name temperance as one of six ‘core moral virtues.’<sup>94</sup> Defined as ‘the virtue of control over excess’, they expand the term to include ‘any form of auspicious self-restraint.’<sup>95</sup> Secondary virtues collected under temperance include forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, and self-regulation.<sup>96</sup> They note that the strengths of temperance are understood partially by what a person refrains from doing, and they may be noticed more by their absence than their presence. This is perhaps unsurprising, as these qualities are seldom recommended or applauded in contemporary society.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, current accounts of temperance reveal the promising *and* problematic nature of an attempt at recovery. Navigating these issues necessitates a careful methodology, which comprises the final section of this introduction.

#### **1.4 Framing Questions, Sources, and Methodology**

Within the preceding overview of the temperance movement and current understandings of temperance, several questions have emerged:

- *Is temperance as abstinence from alcohol an adequate understanding of the virtue? Did the movement utilize the classical sources accurately and in context?*
- *Does ‘everything in moderation’ provide an attractive or helpful alternative?*
- *Has the literature review provided answers to these questions? Has the literature review gestured towards some appealing possibilities?*

This thesis, therefore, views its task as the philosophical and theological examination of the virtue of temperance – its origins as a cardinal virtue, through the classical and

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<sup>94</sup> Peterson and Seligman, 31.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 480.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 431.

Christian traditions, and into its present state. It is structured around three sets of framing questions:

- *How and why has temperance disappeared from contemporary moral discussion? How did temperance transform from a vibrant cardinal virtue into a repressive and ineffective pseudo-virtue? What has temperance been in its 'past lives'? Who has employed it, and how, and why?*
- *Is it possible to construct a fresh interpretation of the virtue of temperance? What would this contain?*
- *What impact would this interpretation have on the contemporary moral landscape? What difference would it make for issues such as environmentalism or consumerism?*

Answering these questions leads into the body of the thesis, which is divided into three progressive sections.

#### **1.4.1 Chapter Structure and Content**

The first section considers the virtue of temperance in the classical tradition of Greek and Hellenistic culture. Chapter Two examines temperance in the works of Plato, including its adoption into the tetrad of the cardinal virtues and thus its 'canonization' as a virtue of universal import and enduring significance. Chapter Three builds upon this understanding of temperance and examines its development within two schools of thought: Aristotle and the Stoics. It considers the ways in which Aristotle inherited and modified the Platonic understanding of temperance and the lasting changes that ensued. It then considers one example of the Hellenization of temperance within the different stages of Stoic philosophy, and the transmission and adaption of temperance (and the larger tradition of virtue ethics) to Roman culture via Cicero.

The second portion considers temperance within the emerging Christian tradition and its fluctuating relationship with classical moral thought. Chapter Four tracks the development of temperance in the thought of Augustine and Aquinas, when the conversation between Christian and classical morality was still fairly explicit. Augustine and Aquinas demonstrate, in different ways, how the Christian tradition appropriated and incorporated classical morality, particularly the concept of virtue. Chapter Five follows temperance in the thought of John Calvin and John Wesley. The Reformation significantly altered the relationship between the classical and Christian traditions, resulting in the demotion and occasional demonization of virtue language and frameworks. The tetrad of the cardinal virtues is no longer universally accepted as morally formative; rather, it is often linked to a potentially dangerous system of works righteousness. Nevertheless, temperance remains active in moral discussion, although diminished in both form and content.

The final section analyzes the insights gleaned from the historical analysis, develops a fresh account of temperance, and applies this account to contemporary moral discussions. Chapter Six offers a fresh interpretation of the virtue of temperance. It identifies the central components of temperance, which have been associated with temperance in its various historical constructions. It considers some particular characteristics of this fresh interpretation of temperance, and it discusses its relationship to other current understandings of temperance. Finally, it asks whether there exists, in fact, one singular ‘virtue of temperance’, or whether the virtue’s many manifestations are too determined by context to coherently speak of one ‘virtue of temperance’. In conclusion, Chapter Seven argues for the legitimacy of the expansion of the sphere of temperance and applies this fresh interpretation of temperance to the

contemporary moral issue of consumerism, deliberating upon the idea of ‘temperate consumption.’

#### **1.4.2 Methodology and Sources**

This thesis will consider the virtue of temperance within the thought of several central thinkers and schools of thought: Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and Wesley. These figures represent the highlights, so to speak, of the journey and the transitions of the virtue of temperance. Rather than consider temperance within one single school of thought, as do many people in our literature review, I seek to understand temperance as it traverses the streams of philosophical and theological thought, noting the confluences and examining the divergences. Instead of relying solely upon the particularities of one school of thought, the variety of the sources will act as a sort of ‘hybrid vigor’, contributing to the vibrancy and freshness of the discussion and its conclusions.

These sources themselves share several methodological components. First, they all work, to varying degrees, within a shared understanding and vocabulary of the concept of ‘virtue’. To be sure, they have different understandings of the particulars of virtue and its role in the moral life. Yet even Calvin, the least hospitable to the role and value of virtue, views it as a rational moral category. Second, each engages specifically with some moral characteristic called ‘temperance’. They may elevate or diminish it to different degrees; they may relate it differently to various related concepts such as continence, moderation, and self-control. However, each one speaks directly of ‘temperance’ as something that, at the very least, affects the appetites for food, alcohol, and sexual activity.

Such a variety of sources begs the methodological question as well. With such an assortment of sources, the interpretive task can easily become incoherent. To accomplish its task, this thesis utilizes an integrated set of approaches: historical analysis and interpretive application.

#### **1.4.2.1 Historical, Analytical, Interpretive, Applicative**

The first approach is historical. This thesis will examine temperance chronologically within seven particular contexts, attending to its particular voice within the moral thought of each author. Attention will be paid to the ways in which temperance develops throughout its history, noting the similarities and considering the differences:

- *When temperance remains largely unchanged, why is this so? What does this continuity emphasize about the virtue of temperance, its particularities and its universals?*
- *When temperance is significantly changed, what are the causes and effects? What is different about this new temperance? Are the changes permanent?*
- *Within both scenarios, are the developments positive or negative?*

Because temperance has undergone such substantial changes since its inception, the historical survey is especially relevant. Thus, the task of this thesis is simultaneously synchronic and diachronic. It considers temperance *qua* temperance within each context, while acknowledging that virtues and other concepts have historicity and variability; they exist and travel within the stream of history and its philosophical and theological developments.<sup>98</sup> Just as theological work can be both synchronic (as with

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<sup>98</sup> James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [1961] (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004) correctly observes the connected nature of synchronic-diachronic study (as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure), particularly in the study of historical works and concepts. Synchronic work not only supports but actually *is* historical, seeing that ‘as soon as one looks at the synchronic state of language in a past

systematic theology) and diachronic (as with biblical theology), any work in virtue ethics must attend to both the scenes and the storyline.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, the present thesis is also narrational, tracing the history of the virtue of temperance from its origins as a cardinal virtue in the writings of Plato, through the classical and Christian traditions and the temperance movement of the early twentieth century. It offers one telling of ‘the story of temperance’ and proposes an exciting and relevant next chapter for that story.

Proposing a new chapter in the story reveals the second approach as interpretive and applicative. The historical analysis is interesting and valuable; however, any significant recovery of temperance *qua* virtue requires both analytical interpretation and contemporary application. Is today’s temperance the same virtue as the Platonic, Aristotelian, or Thomistic versions? If it is not the ‘virtue’ of the temperance movement, how should it be characterized? An interpretation of the historical survey may suggest a fresh conception of temperance. Moreover, the ‘rediscovery’ of temperance as a compelling and relevant moral trait should, ideally, make some sort of difference to contemporary moral discussion. In a sense, this is the *raison d’être* of this study.

However, proposing to rediscover and reappropriate temperance begs the question of whether such a recovery is practically possible. The aforementioned variety of sources may beg the question: is it possible to speak coherently of the ‘virtue of temperance’? Can the historical analysis yield an account of temperance that is both coherent and persuasive? Extracting an idea from its context and tradition, particularly with an end in mind, risks ‘proof-texting’ and assigning false

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time, then one is entering into a historical investigation’ (3). Similarly, ‘historical texts’ are never purely diachronic, as each begins from a position of synchronous examination (10).

<sup>99</sup> The theological example is from Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications and Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Postmodern World* (Harrisburg PA: Trinity International Press, 1999), 105.

meaning. Heeding Alasdair MacIntyre's assertion that moral concepts cannot be studied apart from their historical context has influenced the structure and approach of this thesis.

Furthermore, a central methodological question in any study of a historical concept is whether it will center primarily upon terminological or conceptual associations. If there is one 'virtue of temperance' to study, will it be represented only by the word 'temperance'? This thesis primarily traces the virtue of temperance as represented by three terms: the Greek *sōphrosynē*, the Latin *temperantia*, and the English *temperance*. The transitions between the terms themselves will be considered, as the virtue of temperance evolves between terms and between languages. Do the etymological changes necessitate an entirely new understanding of the virtue, or is there any continuity? Moreover, while this thesis will attend to the presence of the word 'temperance' in the historical contexts, it will also consider such related concepts as 'continence', 'moderation', and 'self-control' (as well as *enkrateia*, *continentia*, *moderatio*, and *frugalitas*) that intersect with discussions of temperance and often communicate the essence of the virtue.<sup>100</sup> Limiting this study solely to the eponymous terms risks narrowing the field of research unnecessarily and overlooking potentially helpful material.

#### **1.4.2.2 Assumptions and Limitations**

This thesis proceeds upon several philosophical and theological assumptions. First, it stipulates the presence and continuing validity of the ongoing tradition of virtue ethics. While it will not attempt to argue for the universal applicability of the tetrad of the 'cardinal virtues', it will assume their relevance as a moral framework. Second,

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<sup>100</sup> Again, North is an excellent example of this approach in her study of temperance; see *ix* for her statement of this intention.



it assumes the continuing presence and continuity of something commonly called ‘temperance’ such that a study of the ‘virtue of temperance’ is a coherent project. Whether we have (or whether history has) actually been discussing the same virtue will be considered as the thesis progresses; however, it will proceed upon an assumption of the affirmative. Third, it assumes the continuing relevance — or at least the *possibility* of the continuing relevance — of the virtue of temperance for the moral life.

With temperance intersecting with such a variety of subjects, it is helpful to explicitly state what this thesis will and will not address. First, it will not consider the full nature of desire and/or appetite, be it *epithumia*, *cupiditas*, *concupiscentia*, or the ‘flesh’; nor will it consider the full nature and role of emotion or *pathē*. On a related point, the education of these emotions and desires will likewise not be explored. Second, it will not argue for the authority of the tetrad of ‘cardinal virtues’, but will assume their continuing viability as a moral framework. While the ‘cardinality’ of the cardinal virtues has endured since Plato, its structure has been questioned (whether directly or indirectly) beginning with Aristotle’s failure to incorporate its framework. Recent critiques portray the cardinal virtues as overly simplistic and premised upon an anachronistic anthropology, lacking an adequate consideration of human relationality.<sup>101</sup> Although worthy of consideration, these criticisms will not be addressed here.

Finally, although a large portion of this thesis is comprised by a historical survey, it is not a sustained engagement with the thought of Plato, Augustine, or others; nor is it an argument for their particular moral systems. While it strives to accurately convey each author’s thought on temperance, it necessarily engages each

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<sup>101</sup> James Keenan, S.J., ‘Proposing Cardinal Virtues’, *Theological Studies* 56:4 (1995), 709-29.

thinker in a more abbreviated manner than an individual study. This can be challenging with such engaging conversation partners; it can be difficult to pull back and keep the larger view of the forest amidst the fascinating trees. However, it is essential for staying true to the interpretive and applicative task of this thesis.

Many commentators have proposed that the temperance of today is a shadow of its former self and propose its reclamation. However, any attempts at recovery must first ascertain whether there is, in fact, anything worthwhile to recover. Answering this question leads us to the next portion of this thesis, with a historical and contextual study of the past lives of the virtue of temperance. We will begin with Plato, as he institutes the tetrad of the four cardinal virtues and thus establishes temperance as a virtue of lasting import.

## Chapter Two

### The Beginning of a Journey: Temperance in Plato

As discussed in Chapter One, temperance is scarcely present in the current moral lexicon. Yet temperance once occupied a vital position in philosophical thought; together with prudence, justice, and fortitude, it was a cardinal virtue, one of the four ‘hinges’ of the moral life. To fully understand the temperance of today, its history and development must be considered. The Platonic dialogues are the natural starting point for any consideration of the virtue of temperance.

#### 2.1 Introduction to Classical Temperance

While both the concept and the term itself appear before the time of Plato, his sustained examination of temperance (Gk. *sōphrosynē*) – combined with its inclusion in his original scheme of the tetrad of cardinal virtues – is sufficiently innovative to validate it as a point of departure.<sup>102</sup> A consideration of Plato’s account of temperance logically begins with the early dialogue *Charmides*, the most focused and comprehensive treatment of the virtue in the Platonic corpus.<sup>103</sup> However, to remain exclusively within the confines of this dialogue would be to limit our understanding of the term to one specific period of Platonic thought. Plato’s development of the concept of temperance throughout his work, moving from the *Charmides* to the middle and late dialogues, enhances the virtue’s cognitive elements without

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<sup>102</sup> In the interest of continuity and readability, I will use ‘*sōphrosynē*’ as the Greek term for temperance throughout this paper, substituting within the direct quotations when necessary.

<sup>103</sup> I will follow the majority of opinions regarding the chronology of Plato’s dialogues, and use the terms ‘early,’ ‘middle,’ and ‘late’ with the same meanings as are generally accepted, albeit with some disclaimers; see North (152) and Terence H. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11-3.

dismissing them. While the *Charmides* explores such aspects as self-knowledge and knowing one's own business, it also indirectly presents temperance as self-control, an idea which is developed in both the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. These ideas are, however, incomplete without the idea of temperance as order (*kosmos*), symphony (*symphonia*), or harmony (*harmonia*), which follows from insights in the *Gorgias*, the *Republic*, the *Laws*, the *Statesman*, and elsewhere. By holding together the three main elements of Platonic temperance – self-knowledge, self-control, and harmonious order – a fuller conception of the virtue emerges. After a brief introduction to Platonic philosophy and ethics, the definitions and implications of temperance will be examined in fuller detail.

## **2.2 Ethical Foundations: *Eudaimonia* and *Aretē***

Platonic ethics is virtue-based and teleological in focus. The *telos* or highest aim of moral thought and conduct is *eudaimonia*, usually rendered as 'happiness.' To modern ears, the word 'happiness' implies a positive emotional state often associated with pleasure. However, the classical understanding of 'happiness' implied in *eudaimonia* involves a more holistic definition of well-being and distinctively human flourishing, connoting the idea of blessedness and living in accordance with one's chief good or ultimate purpose. Thus, to be 'happy' is to be fulfilled as a human being, living in accordance with the larger world and the larger good. The most thorough discussion of *eudaimonia* occurs in the *Euthydemus*. Plato asserts that 'there could hardly be a man who would not wish to do well' (278e4-6).<sup>104</sup> Although material goods – health, wealth, and so on—are not antithetical to happiness, they must be put to good use to produce any true benefit. *Eudaimonia* results from the proper

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<sup>104</sup> All quotations of Platonic dialogues are from John Cooper, *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997).

use of those goods which we possess: ‘The man who means to be happy must not only have such goods but must use them too’ (*Euthd.* 280d7-9). This ‘proper use’ will only be possible through the possession of virtue; and conversely, the possession of a virtue will also be revealed in the happiness it produces. Thus, the virtues (*aretai*) are the requisite skills and character traits needed to achieve the goal of *eudaimonia*. The *Euthydemus* also stresses the connection between virtue and wisdom, the progression from *eudaimonia* to *sophia*:

Since we all wish to be happy, and since we appear to become so by using things and using them rightly, and since knowledge was the source of rightness and good fortune, it seems to be necessary that every man should prepare himself by every means to become as wise as possible. (*Euthd.* 282a1-5)

If virtue is required for happiness, of what does it consist? That is, exactly what does Plato mean by virtue? The question requires some consideration, as Plato does not approach his topics systematically. To be sure, Plato’s ethical and philosophical thought reveals the influence of his mentor Socrates, especially his early work, with its focus on the connection between virtue and knowledge. Thus, Plato’s early dialogues and thought have been called ‘Socratic,’ in that they tend to promulgate the notion of virtue as knowledge (*epistēmē*).<sup>105</sup> Virtue arises chiefly out of a process of examination – the Socratic dialogues or *elenchus* – which leads one into a fuller, more developed understanding of his or her own views and their shortcomings. Socrates sought not to impress people with grandiose, otherworldly ideas, but engaged them at the level of common moral beliefs.<sup>106</sup> This was, however, an intellectual rather than directly moral undertaking, and involved being able to give an accounting of the whys

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<sup>105</sup> David Carr, ‘The Cardinal Virtues and Plato’s Moral Psychology,’ *Philosophical Quarterly* 38:151 (1988), 187.

<sup>106</sup> Terence H. Irwin, *Plato’s Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 13.

and wherefores of one's actions.<sup>107</sup> Called both 'sufficient and necessary,' knowledge takes the leading, perhaps even solitary role of informing and instilling Socratic virtue.<sup>108</sup>

Plato, however, gradually develops a more nuanced view of the human soul, with implications for the development and possession of *aretē*. In the middle dialogues, he innovatively treats virtue as involving all three parts of the soul – appetite, *thumos* (often translated as 'spirit'), and intellect. Acquiring virtue moves beyond the merely intellectual to include the training of dispositions and emotions, which ideally occurs prior to any philosophical instruction. Things such as music and poetry will lay the groundwork for the epistemic work to come (*Rep.* 376e-377c). The intellect no longer merely ruled over the unruly appetites; rather, all the parts could and should participate in the inculcation of virtue.<sup>109</sup> The Socratic *elenchus* is no longer sufficient in itself. These distinctions become quite central to the discussion of temperance, particularly in a comparison between its intellectual and moral components.

Plato also modifies the Socratic conception of *aretē* throughout his corpus. The early Platonic dialogues describe virtue as *technē*, a 'craft-knowledge' or what Socrates calls a 'science of the self' (*Char.* 165c4-e2). In contrast, Plato's maturing position on virtue suggests that it is a good in itself, which is revealed by one's knowledge of the Forms. This is foreshadowed in the lengthy discussion in the *Charmides*, and elsewhere, about the possession of a virtue requiring an ability to define it adequately. In Book I of the *Republic*, Plato introduces the notion of *aretē* as

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<sup>107</sup> Terry Penner, 'Socrates and the Early Dialogues,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 125. See also Carr, 'Moral Psychology', 188.

<sup>108</sup> Penner, 125.

<sup>109</sup> This view appears to develop as Plato's work matures; e.g. its presence in the *Republic* but not the *Charmides*.

following from something's fulfilling its intended purpose; this is known as the 'function' argument (335b6-11). The proper work of anything is enabled by the working of that thing's particular virtue (*Rep.* 353b2-d1). Moreover, performing one's intended function well, through the possession of *aretē*, will ensure one's happiness. Socrates maintains that the just 'live better and are happier' than the unjust, a position which he accepts as true, but seeks to explore more fully (*Rep.* 352d1-4).<sup>110</sup>

Regarding human *aretē*, Plato states that the soul has both a function and a virtue of its own, the latter being necessary for the former (*Rep.* 353d3-e2). Virtue as a state of the soul also appears in the early discussions of the *Charmides*, where Socrates argues against temperance being adequately seen merely in external actions (*Char.* 159b-161a). There are also several types of *aretē* evidenced in humans. Virtue may be natural, revealed in the innate differences between persons (*Rep.* 370ab, 376a). It may be habituated or educated, the product of the training of emotions and attitudes apart from any intellectual exercise (*Rep.* 410d-e). And it may reach its crescendo in the attainment of philosophical virtue.<sup>111</sup> Reaching this level of virtue results in a person who is 'as divine and ordered as a human being can be' (*Rep.* 500c7-d1).<sup>112</sup> And underlying these classes of virtue are the unquestioned assumptions that human *aretē* is admirable, good, and beneficial (*Char.* 159c1).

The study now turns to Plato's treatment of temperance. The diverse settings of the dialogues involving temperance, and the evolving nature of Plato's moral philosophy and metaphysics, necessitate the examination of several dialogues. And

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<sup>110</sup> See also *Rep.* 347e, 353e9-13.

<sup>111</sup> This, in a way, brings Plato full circle to the early dialogues, wherein he stresses the importance of intellectual virtue.

<sup>112</sup> See also *Rep.* 485a-486e.

nowhere is the subject given more consideration than in the early dialogue *Charmides*.

### **2.3 Plato's Introduction to Temperance: The *Charmides***

The *Charmides* is an explicit investigation into the nature of temperance.<sup>113</sup> Even among the cardinal virtues, temperance has been called the most 'Socratic' of the four, with the acknowledgment of Socrates as the '*sōphrōn anēr*' notably impacting many dialogues.<sup>114</sup> In seeking to understand temperance, the dialogue proceeds through several proffered definitions, only to reject them all in the end. However, the task is more complex than mere description of a Greek term, as the dialogue is situated firmly within the context of Plato's larger concerns for wisdom and ethical conduct. North and van der Ben accurately identify the dialogue, not as a straightforward pursuit of a single answer, but as a journey through multiplex and overlapping issues.<sup>115</sup> It is no surprise, then, that a discussion of the *Charmides* is less coherent than that of other dialogues.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, it is rich with meaning about Socrates himself and his attempts to reach an understanding of this elusive virtue, especially if one lets the dialogue speak from its own location in the corpus and on its own terms. Remembering where the *Charmides* occurs in the Platonic corpus may save the reader from unnecessary burdens in its construal, as many ideas such as metaphysics and epistemology receive treatment in later dialogues that should not

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<sup>113</sup> There are several excellent monographs on the *Charmides*, including van der Ben; Harold Brown, *Plato's Charmides: Sophrosyne and Philosophy* (New York: New School for Social Research, 1979); Collins; David Levine, 'Plato's *Charmides*: On the Political and Philosophical Significance of Ignorance' (PhD. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1975); Pichanick; Rademaker; Schmid; and Godfrey T. Tuckey, *Plato's Charmides* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

<sup>114</sup> North, 152-3.

<sup>115</sup> See North and van der Ben for a thorough discussion of some of these issues.

<sup>116</sup> Irwin, *Moral Theory*, 19.



factor into considerations of this early work.<sup>117</sup> The *Charmides* cannot be expected to do the task of later dialogues; rather, it addresses a particular topic at a point fairly early in Plato's ethical and philosophical development.

### 2.3.1 Prologue

While not contributing directly to the set of definitions of temperance, the prologue provides insight into general Socratic philosophy and lays the groundwork for the body of the dialogue. The opening assertion that young Charmides should have an opinion on temperance (if he truly possesses the virtue) hints at what will become arguably the dialogue's most complex and controversial issue: that the possession of a virtue will necessarily entail a good knowledge of its content and nature. This early allusion to self-knowledge will prove important as the dialogue progresses.<sup>118</sup> The reaction of Socrates to the beauty and youthful wisdom of Charmides also foreshadows a conception of temperance that will only be explored in later dialogues, that of temperance as self-control. Socrates begins the dialogue by getting worked up over the beautiful youth, then getting himself under control again.

Another interesting facet of the prologue is the presence of Critias and his nephew Charmides as Socrates' dialogue partners.<sup>119</sup> To the historically informed reader, the setting and composition of the dialogue is decidedly satirical, as two members of the infamous Thirty Tyrants could hardly be expected to display any true measure of temperance.<sup>120</sup> As aristocratic males, with all that class and education could offer, they should have been first-rate expressions of the virtue of temperance, and yet they were later to descend into tyranny and the abuse of power. Moreover,

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<sup>117</sup> Tuckey, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Rademaker, 327.

<sup>119</sup> Schmid, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Cooper, *Plato*, notes that the ancient reader would have been perfectly aware of this, and the 'historic overtones would have played vividly against the bright surface of the dialogue (639).

the presence of Socrates, and the contrast of his behavior with their own, increases the sense of irony regarding how the *sōphrōn* man ought to behave.<sup>121</sup> Their discussion thus illustrates Socrates' goal of utilizing the Socratic *elenchus* to mold the privileged into suitable rulers of the *polis*.<sup>122</sup> Still, the focus is not limited to the aristocracy, as the *Charmides* investigates 'the common property of being a temperate person that belongs to all temperate people.'<sup>123</sup> This is a helpful move, as temperance is often considered to be the virtue, alternately, of aristocratic males, youth, and aged persons. It is in the definitions that the reader will attempt to discern this common property.

### 2.3.2 The Definitions of Temperance

The *Charmides* moves through a catalog of definitions of temperance,<sup>124</sup> all of which are considered, but ultimately rejected by Socrates and his interlocutors.

- 1) 'Doing everything in an orderly and quiet way' (159b)
- 2) Modesty, that which 'makes people ashamed and bashful' (160e)
- 3) Doing one's own business (161b), and the doing of good actions (163e)
- 4) Derivations of knowing oneself (164d)
  - 4a) Knowledge of oneself (165c5-7)
  - 4b) Knowledge of various types, knowledge of knowledge itself (166c2-3)
  - 4c) Knowledge of what one does and does not know (167a6-7)
  - 4d) Knowledge that one does and does not know (170d2-3)
- 5) Knowledge of good and evil (174b-c)

These definitions proceed from the superficial to the philosophical, from behavior to understanding. The first two are straightforward and partially true, like the first thoughts of an intelligent youth. The remaining definitions, however, aim to introduce the element of knowledge and to unite good and truth in a single science.

The dialogue's manner of progression is itself demonstrative of Socratic temperance,

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<sup>121</sup> Rademaker, 325.

<sup>122</sup> Tuckey, 17.

<sup>123</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 36.

<sup>124</sup> Various commentators assign between four and six definitions to *sōphrosynē* in this portion of the *Charmides*, depending on how they choose to subdivide definitions 3 and 4. I tend to agree with North (155) and have used a similar structure, as the distinctions within (3) and (4) are, for the purposes of this thesis, less significant than those between the main points.

as the replacement of ignorance by knowledge is part and parcel of both the Socratic *ethos* and his dialectic.<sup>125</sup>

### 2.3.2.1 Behavioral Definitions of Temperance

In response to Socrates' request, the first answer volunteered by Charmides is that temperance is 'doing everything in an orderly (*kosmiōs*) and quiet way' (159b). The 'quietness' component of his response is quite unsurprising, considering Charmides' age and social status. As a young man in aristocratic Athens, he would be expected to behave with appropriate youthful modesty, and to this his mind would naturally turn.<sup>126</sup> Although unsurprising, this is nonetheless a partial response, both because it reflects the aspect of temperance most associated with young men, and because it limits itself to external behavior.<sup>127</sup> Yet the answer is not grossly incorrect, as Charmides would have learned both the meaning and the model of temperance from his elders. Thus, Charmides' first attempt at defining temperance is imperfect, yet understandable. What is not addressed is the first part of Charmides' initial attempt at a definition, that of *kosmiōs pratein*.<sup>128</sup> Socrates' choice to focus upon the 'quietness' portion of the answer skates over an interesting and ultimately fruitful notion of temperance, that of order (*kosmos*). While the language of *kosmos* does not appear again in the *Charmides*, this foreshadows developments in later dialogues.

When pressed by Socrates to 'start over again and look into yourself with greater concentration' (160d), Charmides ventures that temperance is *aidōs*, or a sense

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<sup>125</sup> North, 155-6.

<sup>126</sup> Rademaker, 326.

<sup>127</sup> Tuckey, 19; Rademaker, 328.

<sup>128</sup> It is puzzling that North does not mention this element of the first definition, given her interest in *sōphrosynē* across the whole of the Platonic corpus. This may be due to her insistence upon examining each portrayal of *sōphrosynē* within its particular dialogical context. However, its clear connection to later glosses of *sōphrosynē* as order makes its appearance in *Char.* 159b3 textually important within the larger scope of Plato's work.

of shame or modesty (160e). This definition may be considered an improvement over quietness, as it moves beyond behavior and to its motivations.<sup>129</sup> The Greek concept of *aidōs*, like that of temperance, is fairly complex and defies any simplistic understanding, evoking a sense of right behavior and observance of one's situation in the *polis*. When Charmides identifies temperance as shame and modesty, he is again displaying the social training he has received as an Athenian youth. He is *sōphrōn* because he is cognizant of others' considerations of him and his fulfillment of societal standards.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, this definition is also insufficient, as it presents 'a merely negative aspect of virtue' and fails to get to the heart of the matter.<sup>131</sup>

Charmides now offers an answer presumably supplied by Critias, as it is more nuanced than the previous attempts. Temperance, he suggests, is 'doing one's own business' (161b). This answer introduces concepts central both to the *Charmides* and to the larger Platonic corpus, as any understanding of 'one's own' implies a certain level of self-knowledge.<sup>132</sup> Critias then makes a subtle shift in the definition, from 'doing one's own business' (161e) to 'the doing of good things' (163e). This modification provides Socrates with three opportunities: to liken the *sōphrōn anēr* to a craftsman, to emphasize the utility and beneficial nature of temperance, and to associate temperance and knowledge.<sup>133</sup> Socrates thus transitions into the longest and most difficult part of the discussion, the relationship between virtue and knowledge.

Like the previous definitions, this attempt to define temperance is imprecise and ultimately unsatisfactory. Socrates calls the definition a 'riddle' and states that 'it is difficult to understand what is meant by "one's own"' (162b), resulting in an

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<sup>129</sup> Rademaker, 329; see also Tuckey, 19-20.

<sup>130</sup> Here Charmides demonstrates what Schmid calls 'the inner essence of the traditional ideal' (27).

<sup>131</sup> Tuckey, 20.

<sup>132</sup> 'Doing one's own' is further explored in 171d-e, wherein *sōphrosynē* is the means by which 'every household would be well-run, and every city well-governed' (171e). Equating *sōphrosynē* with governance of the whole foreshadows *Republic IV* and the division of labour it suggests.

<sup>133</sup> North, 156-7.

answer that is unhelpful in its breadth.<sup>134</sup> Van der Ben correctly saw in this answer, not only a third attempt to define temperance, but a pivotal moment in the discussion, a loss of focus on temperance itself and devolution into a wide range of issues.<sup>135</sup> More importantly, it is not enough merely to do the right things; they must be done out of an awareness of their rightness and in an intentional manner. The conversation has returned to Socrates' connection of virtue and knowledge.

### **2.3.2.2 Intellectual Definitions of Temperance**

Upon Socrates' question in 164b regarding the craftsman's knowledge of his good actions, Critias now forgets himself somewhat and takes an entirely different approach, claiming that temperance is 'to know oneself' (164d) and that "'know thyself" and "be temperate" are the same' (164e). It is a compelling assertion, as the directive 'Know Thyself' greeted those who entered Apollo's temple at Delphi. However, Tuckey rightly reminds us that this relationship between terms is more allusion than equation, as the assertion is not explicitly supported by the *elenchus*. This definition is not altogether removed from previous considerations – such as modesty, doing one's work, and even the religious connotations of knowing one's place in the scheme of things – as the term 'self-knowledge' suggests a familiarity with one's particular capacities and an awareness of the attendant limits.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, Socrates does not appear to hold the answer in contempt, as his penchant for rigorous self-knowledge was well known.<sup>137</sup> Thus, Critias seems to have found an

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<sup>134</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 38.

<sup>135</sup> van der Ben, 5-6.

<sup>136</sup> Tuckey, 10.

<sup>137</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 39.

important aspect of temperance that may be useful in clarifying what the previous answers attempted to express.<sup>138</sup>

The dialogue reaches a crossroads, as the discussion moves from the traditional understandings of temperance into an exploration of its intellectual basis.<sup>139</sup> The particular understanding and derivation of the term ‘self-knowledge’ is informative. Critias’ ‘Know Thyself’ arises from *gnōsis – gnōthi sauton* – which denotes both knowledge and acceptance of one’s place in the world. However, the discussion now turns to knowledge as *epistēmē*, which represents the science of knowledge than its ethical outcomes.<sup>140</sup> This semantic modification paves the way for the understanding of temperance as an awareness of the content and limits of one’s knowledge, a ‘thoroughly Socratic notion.’<sup>141</sup> Within this new paradigm, Socrates and his interlocutors explore his contention that temperance is some form of knowledge. The following definitions of temperance are considered: knowledge of itself, knowledge of other sciences, knowledge that one does and does not know, knowledge of what one does and does not know, and finally knowledge of good and evil. The dialogue progresses from superficial to profound, from action to knowledge.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the subject has become the examination of the Socratic equation of virtue and knowledge, rather than the purported definition of the particular virtue of temperance. This ‘atheistic interpretation of Delphic self-knowledge’ leaves behind the established Greek understanding of temperance and launches a new branch of the discussion.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 39.

<sup>139</sup> North, 157.

<sup>140</sup> Schmid, 43.

<sup>141</sup> Rademaker, 332-3. He later notes: ‘When, however, *gnōthi sauton* is reinterpreted in terms of Socratic self-knowledge, we are considerably removed from conventional interpretations of the virtue’ (335).

<sup>142</sup> North, 157.

<sup>143</sup> Schmid, 38.

The importance and impact of this topical shift is complicated and somewhat ambiguous. Plato is grappling with central issues in Socrates' ethical framework, notably the question of how one might know what one knows.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, this paradigm shift regarding self-knowledge takes the definition, and the reader, even further away from anything commonly associated with temperance. Without being completely sidetracked by complex epistemological issues, there are several insightful connections to be made.

Alan Pichanick sees within the *Charmides* the connection between four interconnected types of knowledge: knowledge of ignorance, self-knowledge, knowledge of the good, and knowledge of the whole.<sup>145</sup> He correctly observes that true Socratic self-knowledge is connected to knowledge of ignorance, and he strengthens his claim with a reference to the *Apology*, wherein Socrates says that 'human wisdom has little or no value' and 'the wisest of you men is he who has realized, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is really worthless' (23b).<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, the structure of the dialogue suggests that there are limits to what may be known or practiced in a *sōphrōn* manner.<sup>147</sup> When these limits are recognized and embraced, self-knowledge will more closely approach truth. This acceptance of natural limits then fosters an appropriate self-knowledge, as later indicated in the *Theatetus*: 'You will be more modest and not think you know what you do not know' (*Theat.* 210c3-4). The truly *sōphrōn* soul will be aware of its limits and allow its words and actions to reflect this awareness. And although Socrates may be its exemplar, this idea is not original to him. Adriaan Rademaker documents the idea

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<sup>144</sup> Tuckey, 22-3.

<sup>145</sup> Alan Pichanick, 'Sōphrosynē as Whole-Mindedness: Socratic Self-Knowledge in Plato's *Charmides*', 2008 (<http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/alumni.stjohnscollege.edu/resource/resmgr/docs/pichanick.pdf>).

<sup>146</sup> This relates to Schmid's claim that self-understanding can become deluded, perpetuating misunderstandings about one's state of wisdom and ignorance (Schmid, 56).

<sup>147</sup> Brown, *Charmides*, 364-5.

that, in Isocrates and others, Athens in its early stages was more modest: ‘In its humble origins, a city is forced to moderation, temperance and *metriotēs*, and to careful deliberation.’<sup>148</sup> As Athens grew in standing and influence, the *polis* grew in *hubris* as well.

Despite these relevant insights, the nature of temperance remains undiscovered. The investigation into *epistēmē* yields nothing definite; yet the dialogue never offers any viable alternative, as Socrates always identifies temperance as a variety of knowledge.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, he also fails to recognize the role of any affective condition in attaining *eudaimonia*,<sup>150</sup> which Plato will correct later in the *Republic* when he discusses the role of education in instilling virtue. It is no wonder that the dialogue closes in a state of confusion.

### 2.3.3 Unspoken Definitions and Implicit Assumptions

The *Charmides* ends in a difficult place. It concludes in *aporia*, and the reader must wait for Plato’s development of temperance in the later dialogues. Furthermore, the definitions explored therein seem disconnected from the term’s current meanings, as none of the standard translations (such as ‘self-control’ or ‘moderation’) easily aligns with the four definitions given in the *Charmides*.<sup>151</sup> However, there is one more semantic alternative present in the dialogue, although it reveals itself within the action and not the discussion. Socrates’ own actions (and his reflections upon those actions) reveal another key meaning, that of temperance as self-control and self-restraint. While this definition is never explicitly discussed in the *Charmides*, Socrates himself models that precise aspect of temperance upon his introduction to the beautiful

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<sup>148</sup> Rademaker, 248.

<sup>149</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 40.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>151</sup> Rademaker, 12-3.



Charmides. When Socrates is overtaken with desire, he must pause and regain control of himself before proceeding, not allowing his desire to interfere with his rationality. Thus, the reader is led, in an almost circular fashion, back to the common understanding of temperance as self-control.

While the *Charmides* does not explicitly consider this aspect of temperance, its presence is important, perhaps fundamental, for Plato's later treatment of the virtue.<sup>152</sup> Interestingly, it is Socrates' actions, not his rhetoric, which emphasize this aspect of temperance.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, in spite of the overtly intellectual nature of the bulk of the dialogue, the moral allusions are present and important, as is the portrayal of Socrates as the paradigm of the virtue. Indeed, before the word temperance even mentioned in the dialogue, it is apparent that Socrates himself is the *sōphrōn anēr*. Finally, it must be noted that the moral and intellectual components of temperance are by no means divorced. They both proceed from Socrates' commitment to self-knowledge and from the discipline that accompanies that commitment.<sup>154</sup> Socrates' rational self-control honors both Charmides and himself; in this, it reveals the extent to which 'the multi-dimensionality of Socratic dialectic' makes one rational as well as moral, redefining the ancient Greek ideal of self-knowledge.<sup>155</sup>

One additional point is important. Running through the dialogue and unobtrusively underwriting the entire discussion is a set of virtually unchallenged presuppositions, against which the definitions of temperance are considered and judged. These deal not with the definition of the virtue *per se*, but with the purpose

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<sup>152</sup> This definition finds greater appreciation in later dialogues. Rademaker notes, 'In other texts, this notion of control of desires is either taken for granted as a definition of *sōphrosynē* (*Gorgias*) or taken as a point of departure for further exploration (*Republic*)' (294-5).

<sup>153</sup> North observes: 'The fact that Socrates' *erōs* is directed towards the intellect of Charmides, rather than towards his physical beauty, is a constant reminder of *sōphrosynē* in the popular sense of self-control' (154).

<sup>154</sup> Schmid notes: 'Socrates' moderation is no mere disposition of behavior, natural or otherwise. It is a dynamic, voluntary habit that can require controlling his impulses and enacting his deeper sense of himself, his identity as a lover of wisdom' (9).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

and value of the virtue in daily life. They are found in the prologue, body, and epilogue, and are as follows:

- 1) Temperance is intimately linked to both physical and mental wellness: ‘When the soul acquires and possesses temperance, it is easy to provide health both for the head and for the rest of the body’ (157a).
- 2) Temperance will not be possessed unknowingly: ‘It is clear that if temperance is present in you, you have some opinion about it’ (159a).
- 3) Temperance is meritorious: ‘The temperate life is necessarily an admirable thing’ (160b); temperance is ‘placed among the admirable things’ (160d).
- 4) Temperance will benefit and bless those who possess it: ‘Now I divine that temperance is something beneficial and good’ (169b); ‘I think that temperance is a great good, and if you truly have it, that you are blessed’ (176a).
- 5) Temperance is not just one good thing among many; rather, it holds the superlative place among things, ‘the thing we have agreed to be the finest of all’ (175b).

Socrates spends an entire dialogue debating the finer points of knowledge and temperance, yet holds the above premises as sacrosanct. Indeed, they are the yardsticks against which the veracity of each definition is measured.<sup>156</sup> In response to Critias’ suggestion that temperance is of no benefit, Socrates scolds himself for being so inept as to arrive at this obviously untenable conclusion:

At the end of the *Charmides* Socrates claims that, despite the apparent tendency of the argument, he does not believe that temperance is really useless; on the contrary, he thinks (*oimai*) that he has been a bad inquirer and that, in fact, temperance is useful, indeed that it is sufficient for happiness (*Char.* 175e5-176a1). In this case Socrates does not accept the ostensible conclusion of the elenchus, but he implies that we would have to accept it if it did not conflict with our firm convictions about temperance.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See Irwin, *Ethics*, 35-6; and Rademaker, 328-9.

<sup>157</sup> Irwin, *Ethics*, 19.

Despite his apparent failure, Socrates retains his ‘firm convictions about temperance’ as a ‘genuine virtue.’ This, in itself, gestures towards one of the premises that guide the study of temperance (and *aretē* in general) at its most basic level.

#### 2.3.4. Conclusions on the *Charmides*

Although complex and often convoluted, the dialogue yields several important points. First, the *Charmides* brings both body and soul under the purview of temperance, an assumption that is all the stronger for its unobtrusiveness. Irwin correctly observes that ‘Socrates never even argues against the restriction of temperance to desires for bodily satisfaction; he assumes that temperance is unrestricted in its scope.’<sup>158</sup> Second, the search for an acceptable definition of temperance proves virtually impossible to conclude in any satisfactory manner. The dialogue thus concludes in abrupt aporia, as Socrates remarks, ‘But now we have got the worst of it in every way and are unable to discover to which one of existing things the lawgiver gave this name, temperance’ (*Char.* 175b3-5). This frustrates him, as he firmly believes in the value of temperance and hopes to see its value realized.

However, the lack of resolution does not mean that Socrates lacks a viewpoint on temperance.<sup>159</sup> This one virtue is seen, in the *Charmides*, to be all encompassing and sufficient for health and happiness. Socrates’ early connection of temperance with physical and mental health indicates that temperance actually reveals the presence of virtue within the soul.<sup>160</sup> Although Socrates finds himself in a conundrum over where the dialogue has taken them, this is no cause for despair, as – true to the nature of the Socratic *elenchus* – it invites us to participate in the search for the

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<sup>158</sup> Irwin, *Moral Theory*, 87.

<sup>159</sup> Irwin states, ‘On the contrary, it is his firm view that creates the puzzle. He has found that the different conceptions of temperate behavior and different criteria for temperance lead us to one virtue, not to several virtues’ (*Ethics*, 42).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

virtue's meaning. There are allusions to the direction Plato will take in later dialogues, as careful exegesis reveals areas of possible development (i.e. temperance as self-control and temperance as order).<sup>161</sup> Thus, both the implicit and the explicit definitions of temperance will prove themselves more important to Plato's overall treatment of temperance than a superficial review of the *Charmides* would suggest.

## **2.4 Development of Temperance in Other Dialogues**

As was stated in the introduction, limiting the study of Platonic temperance to the *Charmides* would fail to appreciate the development of Plato's thought on the virtue and would conceal what I argue is the maturity of the virtue's applications and scope. To gain a full view of temperance, one must journey through several other dialogues, notably the *Gorgias*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Laws*. They and a few others will be considered to see what insights they bring to bear on the discussion. This foray is particularly important when one considers that, according to at least one commentator, the two most enduring images related to temperance – the charioteer of the *Phaedrus* and the *sōphrōn* man as the friend of God in the *Laws* – come from dialogues not normally associated with this particular virtue.

### **2.4.1 The *Gorgias***

The *Gorgias* marks the beginning of Plato's expansion of temperance beyond the sheer intellectualism of the *Charmides*.<sup>162</sup> If self-control is the one definition of temperance that is never explicitly addressed in the *Charmides*, then the *Gorgias* is the initial corrective. Socrates reminds Callicles that bravery is not enough, that the superior man must first of all rule himself (491d). When Callicles equates this with

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<sup>161</sup> Tuckey, 5.

<sup>162</sup> North declares this where Plato's 'systematic study of *sōphrosynē* as the control of appetites and desires begins' (159).

stupidity, Socrates likens the undisciplined man, bent only upon pleasure, to a leaky jar which cannot hold anything of importance (493b-494a). Although he begins by calling temperance ‘self-control’ and ‘mastering of oneself’ (491d-e), he then moves away from the sheer intellectualism of the temperance of the *Charmides*, Socrates defines it both as discipline (*paideia*) and order (*kosmos*). By comparing structure (*taxis*) with *kosmos*, Socrates explains how the soul, like a house, needs to be ‘organized and orderly’ (503d-504c). This order he calls ‘self-control’ (504d). Here Plato makes an intriguing and significant connection of terms. Self-control is said to lead to orderliness of the soul, a cause-and-effect relationship.<sup>163</sup> Instead of merely refuting the cognitive emphasis of the *Charmides*, the *Gorgias* seeks to unite the two notions in a cohesive unit. Thus, defining temperance as ‘self-control’ initiates a new direction in Platonic thought on temperance without completely rebutting the previous conclusions.

Socrates then states that the *sōphrōn* soul is ‘a good one,’ and that the ‘foolish (*aphron*) and undisciplined (*akolastos*)’ soul is the opposite and is therefore bad (507a). Note that this comparison cleverly combines both the intellectual and affective aspects of temperance (507a). This self-control, he says, will lead one to ‘do what’s appropriate with respect to both gods and human beings,’ or acting justly (507b). After discussing its connection with piety and bravery, he concludes that the *sōphrōn* man is ‘a completely good man’ who ‘does well and admirably whatever he does’ and who is ‘blessed and happy’ (507c). In a move which foreshadows the social importance of temperance, Socrates states that the undisciplined man will have neither community nor true piety, as he will be unable to have true partnership.

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<sup>163</sup> North first claims that self-control is the primary translation of temperance in the *Gorgias*, and that ‘no other definition is even suggested’ (159). However, these passages seem to offer a different view, as North herself later notes (161).

The presence of temperance as ‘orderly arrangement’ highlights its other semantic gloss in the *Gorgias*, that of order (*kosmos*) (506e-507a). Following the concept of ‘nature as order,’<sup>164</sup> temperance is displayed in the proper arrangement and interaction of things. This may also serve as a bridge between temperance and self-control. As it stabilizes the soul, temperance brings discipline and harmony to all its varied parts through their proper interaction, and thereby facilitates self-control. Although the exact nature of this *kosmos* is unclear, it contains elements of both rationality and control, based on its contrast with *akolasia* and *aphrosynē*. The *Gorgias* is thus a turning point in Plato’s treatment of temperance.<sup>165</sup>

Additionally, the *Gorgias* foreshadows the *Republic* in two important ways. The first is the connection between temperance and justice.<sup>166</sup> When Callicles applauds those who are capable of ‘getting a greater share,’ he cites the common opinion that getting more than one’s share is ‘shameful’ and ‘unjust’; thus, justice and temperance (harkening back to the *Charmides*) are connected (483c). Thus, Callicles’ attack on temperance and justice sets the stage for their close connection, which is strengthened in 507b. The second is the relationship between the soul and the state. Socrates recommends the cultivation of discipline to everyone, whether ‘a private citizen or a whole city,’ in order to properly direct ‘all of his own affairs and those of his city’ (507d4-6). The communal, political application of this counsel is the special function of temperance.

It is no longer *sophia* which offers the unifying factor between the virtues, and *Gorgias* avoids Socrates’ reduction of all virtue to knowledge. Instead, *sōphrosynē* with its multiple uses now provides Socrates with a powerful tool to vindicate the *compatibility* of the virtues, without having to identify them all with knowledge.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> North, 161.

<sup>165</sup> North calls the *Gorgias* ‘Plato’s first important advance over the earlier, Socratic conception of *sōphrosynē* as a form of knowledge’ (163).

<sup>166</sup> This connection will be further developed in the *Laws*; see 2.5.4 below.

<sup>167</sup> Rademaker, 316.

This anticipates the state-soul connection in the *Republic*, wherein temperance unites both the three aspects of the soul and the various classes of the *polis*.<sup>168</sup>

#### 2.4.2 The *Republic*

The *Republic* follows the *Gorgias* in its emphasis on the moral rather than intellectual nature of the virtue, as temperance in the *Republic* has no ties to *epistēmē*; it is in some ways the opposite of the temperance of the *Charmides*. The first appearance of temperance in Book III combines two common uses of temperance – obedience to the rulers and ruling one’s physical pleasures. Socrates names ‘obeying the rulers’ and ‘ruling the pleasures of food, drink, and sex for themselves’ as the ‘most important aspects of moderation for the majority of people’ (389d-e). On its own, this can be read as an unduly thin account, construed as ‘no more than a certain narrowness.’<sup>169</sup>

Temperance next appears in Book IV, where Socrates states that he knows of no way to discuss justice without considering temperance as well (430d). Immediately the text defines the virtue as ‘a kind of consonance and harmony... a kind of order and the mastery of certain kinds of pleasures and desires’ (430e). When the interlocutor questions how the self can, in fact, control itself, we have the first discussion of the tripartite soul, although it is not yet named as such. The wisdom of the ‘superior few’ will ‘measure and direct... the desires of the inferior many,’ (431c); this he calls ‘moderation’ (431d). It is agreed that the ‘better’ part should rule the ‘worse,’ and that self-control lies in this rule (431a, 442c). This worse part is the ‘appetitive’ part of the soul – the largest part – and is ‘most insatiable’ and ‘not fitted

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<sup>168</sup> Rademaker, 316.

<sup>169</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*: How a Virtue Can Become Socially Disruptive’, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13:1 (1988), 1-11 (6). MacIntyre proceeds to contrast this ‘narrow account’ of Platonic temperance with the ‘genuine *sōphrosynē*’ of Aristotle; however, I believe this is a needlessly restricted reading of Platonic temperance, as supported throughout the balance of this chapter.

to rule’ as the rational part is fitted to do (442a-b). This results, however, not in martial law but in friendly agreement, and introduces the notion of temperance as the congruous interaction of the various parts of the soul. When both the rulers and the ruled agree on this arrangement, temperance may be said to ‘resemble a kind of harmony (*harmonia*)’ (431e). When pressed on this point, Socrates makes an interesting move, stating that temperance ‘spreads throughout the whole’ and makes all its members ‘sing the same song together’ (432a). This ‘unanimity’ between ‘the naturally worse and the naturally better’ regarding the order of rule is the hallmark of temperance. Raphael Demos describes this unanimity as a ‘sense of community... a sense of a common loyalty,’ which is ‘the *essence of sōphrosynē*.’<sup>170</sup>

Temperance thus makes a key shift in importance. As a moral virtue, temperance may belong to the ‘inferior many,’ as they would be the ones most in need of regulation. But as a civic virtue, it brings consonance to the disparate parts.

He [the *sōphrōn* man] puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes on a musical scale – high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious (443d).

What was separate is now a unified, purposeful whole. The unity present within may be due to a ‘harmony of belief,’ with each part in agreement on who should rule.<sup>171</sup> This assessment of capacity to rule arises from an accurate self-knowledge on each part, their knowing whether or not *they* are specified as the part designed to rule. Thus, the three components of temperance – self-knowledge, self-control, and harmonious order – are connected in this image.

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<sup>170</sup> Raphael Demos, ‘A Note on *Sōphrosynē* in Plato’s Republic,’ *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 17:3 (1957), 400. Christopher Rowe also call this ‘the essence of temperance’; see Christopher J. Rowe, ‘Justice and Temperance in Republic IV’, in Glen W. Bowersock, Walter Burkert, and Michael C.J. Putman (eds.), *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M.W. Knox* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Press, 1979), 336-44 (339). It is also one origin of the idea of temperance as ‘complete virtue’ (Irwin, *Moral Theory*, 207).

<sup>171</sup> Demos, 400-1.



Plato later provides a contrast in the pseudo-virtue of the oligarch of Book VIII, who would ‘establish his appetitive and money-making part on the throne, setting it up as a great king within himself’ (553c2-4). Although he would seek to appear virtuous and trustworthy, he would suffer constant internal instability.

He holds them in check, not by persuading them that it is better not to act on them or taming them with arguments, but by compulsion and fear, trembling for his other possessions ...For this reason, he’d be more respectable than many, but the true virtue of a single-minded and harmonious soul far escapes him (554d1-e4).

Temperance now disappears until Book IX, where it again regulates the appetitive part of the soul. Concerned with the delights of food, drink, sex, and the money by which they are obtained, these ‘unnecessary pleasures and desires’ are ‘bestly,’ ‘savage,’ and ‘lawless’ (580d-e, 571b-c), and likened to a many-headed hydra (589a-b). Temperance now must control this beast lest it destroy the entire person. It does so in three ways – by awakening reason, by feeding the appetites in a moderate fashion (feeding the gentle heads and curtailing the savage ones), and by quieting the spirit (571d-572a).

Having considered the textual evidence, one question might be said to summarize the central issue of the *Republic* on temperance: Are the appetites merely controlled by reason, or is there agreement between the parts on how to function as a whole?<sup>172</sup> In the final analysis, the dialogue does not appear to resolve this question, but allows the two models to remain in tension.<sup>173</sup> Plato’s overall impression of the appetites was not as negative as that of a pure Socratic, although his position on them

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<sup>172</sup> William Chase Greene, ‘The Paradoxes of the Republic,’ *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), 199-216, calls reason ‘the inward grace that guides the whole moral personality’ and links it to Plato’s use of ‘conversion,’ *peristrōphē*, in 518bc, 521c (10).

<sup>173</sup> Daniel C. Russell, *Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 218.

remained ambiguous.<sup>174</sup> And although *kosmos* does not make as strong an appearance here as it does in the *Gorgias*, it is present nonetheless (430e) and does reinforce the theory of agreement of parts, as order implies a lack of chaos.<sup>175</sup> An excellent example of the shift from control to agreement is in C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*. When a young man with a lizard called Desire roosting on his shoulder, compelling him to go this way and that; when the man resists, the lizard digs his claws in painfully. But when he agrees to cast away his longtime companion of desire, it transforms from an adversarial burden into a beautiful and powerful horse, which becomes a cooperative addition on the journey.<sup>176</sup> And because the regulatory function of temperance applies to all three parts of the soul, an agreed-upon arrangement is implied between the higher and lower members. Temperance is now the 'shared property' of all three classes, uniting the different virtues of each class into a coherent whole.<sup>177</sup> Thus, the *Republic* builds upon the ideas found in the *Gorgias* and expands temperance beyond its scope in the *Charmides*, both theoretically and practically.

### 2.4.3 The *Phaedrus*

For our purposes, the *Phaedrus* is noteworthy for its ambivalence towards temperance.<sup>178</sup> In a discussion on the merits and dangers of *erōs*, Plato frames the discussion of temperance around the contrast of the 'inborn desire for pleasures'

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<sup>174</sup> Nickolas Pappas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the Republic* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 92. He does continue, 'Though Plato does not want to embrace this idea, he does not always take pains to distance himself from it' (93).

<sup>175</sup> Rupert Clendon Lodge, *Plato's Theory of Ethics: The Moral Criterion and the Highest Good* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1928) notes, 'If division is allowed, psychic order is needed to prevent constant internal struggle' (199).

<sup>176</sup> I found this example in Russell, 205-6.

<sup>177</sup> Rademaker, 345.

<sup>178</sup> See Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) for a detailed exploration of this dialogue, particularly the complex relationship between *erōs* and *sōphrosynē*; and the 'ethical value of passion' (232).

against the ‘acquired judgment that pursues what is best’ (237d8-9). Consequently, the two possible outcomes of this struggle for control are ‘being in your right mind’ (*sōphrosynē*) and ‘outrageousness’ (*hubris*) (237e4-6).<sup>179</sup> Judgment and desire are different in the ways by which they induce change: judgment ‘leads us by reasoning’ while ‘desire takes command in us and drags us’ (237e3-5). Temperance is read as sobriety and ‘right-minded reason’ which stands against the ‘madness’ (*mania*) of erotic love. The appearance of this new antonym for temperance broadens the scope of the virtue: not only does it guard against the unruly nature of inborn desires; it also defends its possessor from the ‘external’ danger of *erōs*, wherein a man who is in love ‘has by necessity lost his mind’ (241c1-2). Thus, it protects against dangers both inside and outside one’s control. Yet these ‘dangers’ may also be read as gifts from the gods, as ‘there is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer’ (*Phdr.* 265b). Thus, temperance may be understood as ‘a sanity which happily coexists with a certain type of madness.’<sup>180</sup>

The *Phaedrus* also contains one of the most enduring images of Platonic temperance, the myth of the charioteer (246a6-b1, 253d1-254e10). The soul is likened to a chariot driven by reason and pulled by two horses, one white and one black.<sup>181</sup> In addition to its physical beauty, the white horse is ‘a lover of honor with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone’ (253d6-8). In contrast, the black horse is ‘companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears – deaf as a post – and just

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<sup>179</sup> In ‘The Platonic Synonyms, *Dikaiosynē* and *Sōphrosynē*’, *American Journal of Philology* 72 (1951), 395-414, C. Larson notes the pre-Platonic nature of this rendering of *sōphrosynē* (397).

<sup>180</sup> MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*’, 3. He then notes the presence of two kinds of *sōphrosynē*, ‘the difference being a matter of what other qualities *sōphrosynē* is accompanied by’ (3). He continues, ‘When it is united to the affections of a non-lover (256E), it issues in a kind of narrowness taken to be virtue by the multitude. Yet when allied to “divine madness” in the soul of a lover (256B), it seems to be equated with genuine virtue’ (3).

<sup>181</sup> The white horse is generally accepted to represent *thumos*, the black horse *epithumia*.

barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined' (253e3-5). When confronted by *erōs*, the white horse 'is still controlled, then as always, by its sense of shame'; whereas the black horse 'no longer responds to the whip or the goad of the charioteer; it leaps violently forward and does everything to aggravate its yokemate and its charioteer' (253e5-254a5). It is only through the harshest discipline that the black horse is brought into submission, leaving behind its 'insolence' and becoming 'humble' (*tapeinothesis*).

This dialogue is also ambivalent about the nature of the soul and the passions. It is striking that the internal harmony which is said to characterize the *sōphrōn* soul of the *Republic* is not an option in the *Phaedrus*, due to the inbred deficiencies of the black horse. This raises the question as to whether the charioteer of the *Phaedrus* is actually an attractive or accurate depiction of temperance, particularly in light of its heavy (and varied) appropriation by the early Church Fathers.<sup>182</sup>

#### 2.4.4 The *Laws*

In many ways, the temperance of the *Laws* flows along the same stream as many of its previous conceptions, particularly the tributary of self-control, as when Clinias calls self-mastery 'the first and best of victories' (626e2-3). In discussing the virtues (here 'divine benefits') the Athenian names *phronēsis* as the primary virtue to pursue, followed by temperance, 'the habitual self-control of a soul that uses reason' (631c5-7). In its concern to avoid 'crass ignorance' in its rulers, the *Laws* condemns the disaccord (*diaphonia*) that arises when desire wars against reason, calling it 'folly' (*aphrosynē*) and 'the worst kind of discord in a state and individual' (689a-c). Instead, one should seek concord (*symphōnia*) which is the 'greatest wisdom' (689d).

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<sup>182</sup> North, 179.

Note that temperance is never seen as the primary virtue in the *Laws*, and the Athenian calls it a ‘mere additional element’ (696d). Yet the Athenian now calls temperance the ‘essential adjunct’ that allows their proposed dictator to employ the other virtues which have been attributed to him and which they have deemed essential to his task (709e).<sup>183</sup> This self-control need only be the ‘everyday kind... the spontaneous instinct that flowers earlier in life’ (710a), and not the ‘heightened sense’ of the virtue, which requires it ‘to be good judgment as well.’<sup>184</sup> There is nothing terribly unusual about this version of temperance.

It is further into Book IV that temperance manifests in a different manner. In the midst of discussing the merits of various rulers, Plato contrasts the ordinary dictatorship with something else – ‘a very rare occurrence in the history of the world,’ during which the state will ‘reap the benefit on a grand scale.’ This would occur when those in control are guided by ‘an inspired passion for the paths of restraint and justice.’ Allowing for the near impossibility of such a person, the Athenian nevertheless declares, ‘Blessed is the life of this man of moderation, and blessed they who listen to the words that fall from his lips’ (711d1-712a1). He then elaborates with the story behind his statement:

Now then, our address should go like this: ‘Men, according to the ancient story, there is a god who holds in his hands the beginning and end and middle of all things, and straight he marches in the cycle of nature. Justice, who takes vengeance on those who abandon the divine law, never leaves his side. The man who means to live in happiness latches on to her and follows her with meekness and humility. But he who bursts with pride, elated by wealth or honors or by physical beauty when young and foolish, whose soul is afire with the arrogant belief that so far from

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<sup>183</sup> This gives the virtue more status than ever before, as North observes, ‘The hierarchies of virtues, goods, and values which are so persistent a feature of the *Laws* repeatedly elevate *sōphrosynē* to a position of greater importance than it enjoyed in the *Republic*’ (187).

<sup>184</sup> Rowe states that here ‘Plato explicitly complains about the use of the term *sōphrosynē* which “forces it to be wisdom as well as temperance”’ (‘Republic IV’, 344). I am not sure that I read Plato as complaining about this usage; perhaps he is merely distinguishing between two usages, different in meaning and scope, of the term.

needing someone to control and lead him, he can play the leader to others – there's a man whom God has deserted (715e10-716b1).<sup>185</sup>

When asked the moral of the story, the Athenian replies:

So what kind of conduct recommends itself to God and reflects his wishes? There is only one sort, epitomized in the old saying 'like approves of like' (excess apart, which is both its own enemy and that of due proportion). In our view it is God who is preeminently the 'measure of all things,' much more so than any 'man,' as they say.<sup>186</sup> So if you want to recommend yourself to someone of this character, you must do your level best to make your own character reflect his, and on this principle the moderate man is God's friend, being like him, whereas the immoderate and unjust man is not like him and is his enemy (716c1-d3).

This vignette covers some familiar ground. Temperance is connected to justice and restraint. It leads to blessedness. It can be sabotaged by an incorrect self-image, particularly one tainted by undue pride or foolishness.<sup>187</sup>

It also contains several startling features. In contrast to the earlier assertions of 626e, self-mastery gives way before man's need to be controlled and led by something altogether greater. This something (or someone) greater is God, who is the measure (*metron*) of all things. Thus, temperance is derived from the emulation of God, and the *sōphrōn* man is 'God's friend, being like him' (716d). And for the first time in the Platonic corpus, temperance is connected to something other than an obvious Athenian virtue; it accompanies a posture of meekness and humility (*tapeinosis*), which enable his partnership with justice and his journey towards happiness. Humility, hardly a virtue for Plato or his predecessors, appears in a positive light, however briefly.<sup>188</sup> This is not as radical as it would seem at first

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<sup>185</sup> North calls this is the second most important Platonic passage on *sōphrosynē*, after the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*, largely due to its enduring importance to the patristic authors on deification and theosis (194).

<sup>186</sup> This is a reference back to Protagoras, who said, 'Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are how they are, and of the things that are not how they are not' (Cooper, *Plato*, 1403n.9). See *Theat.* 152a, 167ff.

<sup>187</sup> Note that the word for 'pride' here is *megalauxis*, not *hubris*; 'foolishness,' however, remains *aphrosynē*.

<sup>188</sup> Joseph Tadie outlines the pre-Platonic and Platonic usages of *tapeinosis*, the usual word for 'humility,' and finds them to be generally quite negative; see his 'Between Humilities: A Retrieval of

glance. In the *Charmides*, the behavior of Critias highlights the connection between the love of honor (as intimately connected to the love of one's own opinions) and the inability to know the truth, particularly the truth about oneself. Temperance, then, is tied to 'a certain humility before the truth.'<sup>189</sup> Yet this humility before the truth does not negate the search for truth; rather, it invigorates it, giving the *sōphrōn* person the ability to pursue truth in a more virtuous manner.<sup>190</sup> Temperance both empowers and grounds the journey of the truthful life. Thus temperance, measure, restraint, humility, accurate self-knowledge have been connected in this portion of the *Laws*.

#### 2.4.5 Additional Dialogues

Although the previous dialogues have the greatest content regarding temperance, various others inform the discussion of this virtue in more implicit and tangential ways. Four dialogues in particular – the *Protagoras*, the *Phaedo*, the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and the *Philebus* – contain valuable secondary information on the argument at hand.

In the *Protagoras*, temperance is the opposite of folly (*aphrosynē*) (332b-e). Yet, Socrates has earlier called folly the opposite of wisdom, particularly wisdom *qua* prudence (332a), so the two virtues are somewhat conflated. Socrates asks if this makes wisdom and temperance 'one thing,' but is sidetracked in his question about the equivalence of the virtues when he attempts to compare temperance and justice (333b-334b).<sup>191</sup> Temperance is also equated with acting 'correctly and beneficially,'

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Saint Thomas Aquinas on the Virtue of Humility' (PhD. dissertation, Boston College, 2006), 31-59. While obviously interested in the import of the *Laws* passage, I tend to agree with Tadde that it does not 'add up to anything resembling the Christian virtue of humility,' although exactly which version of this 'Christian virtue of humility' he does not specify. However, I will further explore the connection between temperance and humility in later chapters of this thesis.

<sup>189</sup> S. Collins, 90-1.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>191</sup> Here, as in the *Phaedo*, the intellectual nature of the virtue is not emphasized as it is in the *Phaedrus* and the *Charmides*.

properly controlling one's actions (332a). Thus, to control one's actions is to act correctly, which in turn is to act sensibly, from a sound mind. Thus, several key meanings of temperance find convergence in this dialogue.

In the early work *Phaedo*, temperance serves a more ascetic function, as the passions are to be 'disdained,' not merely controlled (68d1). While a normal man will 'fear to be deprived of other pleasures which they desire' – temperance through intemperance, as it were – true temperance belongs to philosophers. However, it is a special kind of virtue, ascetic as opposed to moderate, as well suited to those 'who most of all despise the body and live the life of philosophy' (68c-d).<sup>192</sup> Even so, this temperance is not the high, Socratic virtue of self-knowledge, but the dealing with bodily passions. It is later in the dialogue, then, that temperance receives yet another interpretation. Socrates compares the soul both to a well-tuned instrument and a healthy, harmonious body.<sup>193</sup> He then calls the soul 'a mixture and harmony of those things, when they are mixed with each other rightly and in due measure (*metron*)' (86c).<sup>194</sup> Essential to note is that the Greek word *harmonia* refers to the tuning of an instrument to one particular pitch or key, the focusing upon a certain octave or scale.<sup>195</sup> Significantly, it appears to be a term of precision and concordance. Although temperance is not explicitly named as the provider of this harmony, the soul's need for harmony has been introduced.

In the *Statesman*, temperance is posited sharply against *andreia* as a necessary balance to this more aggressive virtue. Characterized as 'orderliness,' temperance

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<sup>192</sup> North notes that these remarks 'endow *sōphrosynē* with a degree of hostility towards the senses and all sensual pleasures that is not typical of Greek thought or of Plato himself' (165).

<sup>193</sup> This view of a healthy body as being in 'harmony' would be familiar to an Athenian, but using the idea in relation to the soul was an innovation; cf. David Bostock, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) and Theodore J. Tracy, SJ, *Physiological Theory and the Doctrine of the Mean in Plato and Aristotle* (Chicago IL: Loyola University Press, 1969).

<sup>194</sup> See also discussion above of *Republic* 443d.

<sup>195</sup> John Burnet, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 81.



includes softness, slowness, quietness, moderation, and depth (307a-b). However, when left to their own devices, these qualities will become ‘cowardly and lethargic,’ always seeking the quietude of the private life and ‘being ready to preserve peace of some sort in any way they can’ (307c-e). It is the job of the statesmen to blend the courageous ‘warp’ and the temperate ‘weft’ into a fabric suitable for the *polis* (311b). Temperance does not display here any of the nuances of self-control or harmonious order found in other dialogues, but is largely seen as a set of emotional and acting tendencies towards steadiness and calm.

While not explicitly connected to temperance, Plato’s employing the phrase ‘in due measure’ (*to metrion*) seven times between 283e-284e is also instructive. Calling it a state of truthful being through which excess and deficiency are made apparent, it strongly foreshadows Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean – ‘what is in due measure, what is fitting, the right moment, what is as it ought to be – everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle’ (284e6-8).<sup>196</sup>

Finally, temperance in the *Philebus* continues to stress the importance of measurement for the virtuous life, with the addition of several helpful terms, particularly ‘limit’ (*peiras*). Limit is defined as keeping ‘measure to measure,’ (*metriotēs*) (25b2). Regarding pleasures, the application of limit ‘takes away their excesses and unlimitedness, and establishes moderation and harmony’ (26a5-6).<sup>197</sup> Temperance describes those things that ‘possess measurement’ (52d1-2). And it revisits its connection to the Delphic maxim, as ‘the moderate people somehow always stand under the guidance of the proverbial maxim “nothing too much” and obey it’ (45d7-9). Those who rebel against this counsel are both foolish (*aphrosynē*) and driven to madness (*mania*) (45d9-10).

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<sup>196</sup> In fact, North explicitly calls *to metrion* ‘the concept of the Mean’ (185), although I am unsure about attributing this to Plato outright; I cannot find a passage that strongly supports her assertion.

<sup>197</sup> See also 25e1-2, 26b7-c1.

Temperance also arises from the proper mixture of opposing goods. ‘We stand like cup-bearers before the fountains,’ declares Socrates, ‘the fountain of pleasure, comparable to honey, and the sobering fountain of intelligence, free of wine, like sober, healthy water – and we have to see how to make a perfect mixture of the two’ (61c4-7).<sup>198</sup> This proper and proportionate synthesis maintains the goodness of each component (64d8-10), and will ‘manifest themselves in all areas as beauty and virtue’ (64e6-7). Measure, limit, proportion, and mixture are, thus, essential ingredients in the quest for the good life.

## **2.5 Particularities of Platonic Temperance**

This chapter has investigated the virtue of temperance across the Platonic corpus, wherein three distinct understandings of temperance have emerged. These will now be revisited, accompanied by the full range of their semantic domains. Some issues of particular interest will then be considered.

### **2.5.1 Three Primary Definitions**

Plato employs three main accounts of temperance: self-knowledge, self-control, and harmonious order. *Self-knowledge* is understood as being in one’s right mind, the opposite of arrogance, foolishness, outrageousness, and madness. It is tied to self-control in that it indicates the need for it; Socrates understands himself as a lover of wisdom, and as such he cannot act on every inflamed passion he feels. It is tied to the Delphic maxim *Gnōthi sauton*, ‘Know thyself.’ Thus, it is also connected, at least initially, to the concept of *gnōsis*, with an emphasis is on understanding, not merely collecting factual information. It has religious connotations – to know oneself is to

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<sup>198</sup> Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1953) calls *sōphrosynē* ‘a kind of moral measure, designed to stabilize the harmony of a healthy life’ which serves ‘to keep the parts adjusted to each other’ (184).

know one's place in the scheme of things. It is also tied, at least implicitly, to the concept of humility; the *sōphrōn* person is cognizant of their need to be led by God. This arises from the knowledge of limits and to our knowledge (and acceptance) of their appropriateness. It is understood as acceptance of the extent and limits of one's knowledge, the 'knowledge of our ignorance.'

*Self-control* is first displayed in Socrates' actions in the prelude to the *Charmides*. It is associated with self-mastery, which suggests a deeper level of the conquering of desires than mere self-control. At times it is depicted as a distinct struggle between factions of the soul, as lawless desires war against the rule of reason. At other times it is presented as that which provides order and concord. It is defined as obeying the rules established by the higher powers. It is called 'the first and best of victories.'

*Harmonious order* is understood as consonance and congruence. It is connected to discipline, and is often realized by self-control via the mastery of pleasures. It is friendly agreement between things which are different but related. This friendly agreement arises out of a harmony of belief, which (in Plato) arises from an accurate knowledge of who is best equipped to rule. The harmony it engenders is like the three limiting notes in scale or a musical chord. It is defined as symphony and concord, and is opposed to disaccord; it is the proper arrangement and interaction of things; it is tied to an understanding, and acceptance, of proper measure and limit; it is accomplished through the proper mixture of various elements.

### **2.5.2 Points of Particular Interest**

There are several points of particular interest. First, not only is Plato's treatment of temperance both vigorous and maturing, his treatment of the virtue is justifiably

considered a benchmark, a climactic reinterpretation and unification of the previous understandings of temperance that transformed all future understandings of temperance.<sup>199</sup> Remembering the intensely dynamic and multifaceted virtue found in Plato may help to reclaim the larger implications of the virtue.

Second, the *Republic* contains a twofold approach to the social and political implications of temperance. Temperance was originally the particular virtue assigned to the merchant class of the *polis*. Through Plato's use of the city-soul analogy in the *Republic*, temperance applies to the masses in the same way that it applies to the appetitive part of the soul, so that neither 'lower part' rebels against the rule of its superiors.<sup>200</sup> However, temperance has significant implications, not merely for its designated class, but for the welfare of the entire *polis* and one's participation therein, as all citizens had to act in ways that contributed to the well-being of the city.<sup>201</sup> *Sōphrosynē* is a virtue of the state as a whole, as everyone should be in agreement about who is to rule. Thus, by weaving together the disparate strands of its three classes, temperance signified and contributed to 'the all-embracing order and the morality of restraint and limitation which the *polis* demanded.'<sup>202</sup> It is important to recognize that while *Republic* names justice as harmony between all members, it is temperance which paves the way for this harmony to occur.

Finally, temperance as harmonious order – a connotation which lacks the immediate appeal of self-knowledge or self-control – must be recovered for any thorough consideration of the virtue. The discussions concerning the prevalence or influence of various individual definitions are certainly important; however, in a

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<sup>199</sup> North, 150. She continues: 'It was Plato who defined the canon for all time and is therefore responsible for the special development of *sōphrosynē* in Hellenistic, Graeco-Roman, and Christian thought, which resulted from its inclusion in the Platonic tetrad' (151).

<sup>200</sup> This correlation is also seen in *Laws* 689b.

<sup>201</sup> North, 150.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

significant way they miss the point. It bears asking whether the various connotations of temperance are, in fact, independent of one another. Perhaps a more compelling paradigm is Plato's own concept of *harmonia* as the model for their interactions. Self-knowledge, self-control, order, and attunement – these are all notes in the scale of Platonic temperance. Individually they may ring clear and true, but when brought together in the intentional and related manner of a musical chord, the effect is qualitatively different, and altogether more powerful.

## **2.6 Conclusions on Platonic Temperance**

Across the breadth of the Platonic corpus, the virtue of temperance undergoes significant and (I contend) positive development. The *Charmides* makes two major points regarding temperance: its explicit definition as self-knowledge (despite its aporetic conclusion), and its implicit description as self-control. It also centers on the conviction that temperance is good – life-giving, praiseworthy, beneficial – truly the greatest good of all. The *Charmides* makes big claims for temperance, even if it has trouble keeping them tidy.

Although the *Charmides* is the sole dialogue that focuses directly on temperance, the contributions from other dialogues paint a fuller picture of Plato's evolving understanding of the term. After the early focus upon self-knowledge with Socrates as the virtue's exemplar, the (explicit) definitions of temperance as self-control and order begin to emerge, especially in the *Gorgias* and *The Republic*. These arise from two very different types of interactions between appetite and reason – control and agreement, respectively. While it may appear that the only way to control the restless appetites is to declare martial law, cooperation and rehabilitation are other options. And to bring the appetitive element in the soul to a place of collaboration, it

is necessary to bring order to this microcosm of a soul, as reason brings order out of chaos in the macrocosm of the universe.<sup>203</sup> Although Plato does not mention the tripartite soul in the *Gorgias*, the concept of different parts within the whole is definitely present.<sup>204</sup> *Kosmos*, or the ‘orderly arrangement,’ results in *harmonia*, an important move in Plato’s thinking on temperance.<sup>205</sup> The incorporation of the idea of order transforms the largely negative image of domination into the positive image of cooperation, ‘the harmonious product of intense passion under perfect control.’<sup>206</sup>

In summary: the three major characterizations of temperance are self-knowledge, self-control or self-mastery, and order or harmony. The opposites of temperance include wantonness or lack of self-control (*akolasia*), outrageousness (*hubris*), madness (*mania*), folly or ‘being inferior to oneself’ (*aphrosynē*), and disorder or disharmony (*akosmia* or *stasis*). Therefore, temperance must provide restraint; groundedness; sound-mindedness or ‘common sense’; and order, harmony, or friendly agreement. Its scope is broad and varied; its objects include the physical appetites, self-understanding, the human striving towards knowledge, and the desire for power. It has significant connections with concepts including justice, good sense, measure and the mean, knowledge of limits, the accurate assessment of what is (and can be) known, religious propriety, and even humility. It is part of the tetrad of cardinal virtues, and it is linked to the most enduring moral axiom of the time, that of the oracle at Delphi. Whether the virtue retains any or all of these qualities as it journeys forward is the next point of inquiry.

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<sup>203</sup> North, 152.

<sup>204</sup> Socrates states his hope never ‘to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself’ (*Gorg.* 482c), which foreshadows his assertions that the superior man will first rule himself (*Gorg.* 491d).

<sup>205</sup> North calls this Plato’s ‘distinctive contribution’ (152).

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

## Chapter Three

### Continuing the Classical Tradition: Aristotelian and Stoic Temperance

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Plato's understanding of temperance is vigorous, detailed, and complex. He presents a virtue that is concerned both with physical appetites and with the desire for self-knowledge. The next chapter of the story will chart the course of the virtue through the conclusion of the classical period, focusing upon Aristotelian and Stoic moral thought.

#### 3.1. Aristotelian Temperance

Aristotle's primary consideration of temperance appears in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, III.10-12.<sup>207</sup> In addition to this focused treatment, this study will examine facets of his thought that bear directly upon his ethics in general and his treatment of temperance in particular. Yet, these considerations need to be placed within the larger picture of Aristotelian thought, both on its own and as the primary successor to the Platonic heritage. The logical place to begin is with a consideration of the primary differences between Aristotle and his mentor.

##### 3.1.1 Differences and Particularities

Although Aristotle spent nearly twenty years at the Academy, his mature thought is a development of Plato's work. Points of agreement include their eudaimonistic teleology, the role of virtue as the means of achieving this *eudaimonia*, the centrality

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<sup>207</sup> All citations from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *Eth.Nic.*) are taken from Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Where no title is given in the citation location, it is presumed to be from the *Eth.Nic.* While Broadie and Rowe translate *sōphrosynē* as 'moderation', I have substituted 'temperance' for continuity in reading.

of *logos* in the inculcation of virtue, and the belief in the soul. However, three primary points of divergence emerge, along with their ethical corollaries.

### **3.1.1.1 Monism over Dualism**

In Book I.13 of the *Eth.Nic.*, Aristotle defines ‘human virtue’ as ‘virtue of soul, not of body’, and *eudaimonia* as an ‘activity of soul’ (1102a16-18). To understand fully the ethical import of these statements, the differences between Plato and Aristotle’s notion of the soul must be considered. For Plato, the soul is eternal, incorporeal, and tripartite (*Phdo.* 414a20, *Rep.* IV). In contrast, Aristotle views the soul as tied to the physical body as ‘what makes you alive’ (*de an.* II.1). It is its ‘first actuality,’ as ‘knowledge as possessed’ (*de an.* 415B5). The soul is a ‘connected series of capacities,’ with the human soul possessing three: nutritive, sensitive, and rational (*de an.* 412a27). The soul is constituted by the primary activity of the being in question, its function or *ergon*. Because humans are the only animals with the capacity of rationality (*logos*), our particularly human function must be connected to our particularly human capacity. Because the one capacity particular to humans is our *logos*, therefore, our particularly human function is the activity of our *logos* in accordance with *aretē* (1097b22-1098a20).

### **3.1.1.2 Empiricism over Rationalism**

This difference of opinion regarding the soul arises from another difference. Whereas Plato roots his search for metaphysical meaning in the realm of the Forms, Aristotle begins his metaphysical inquiries in the physical sciences, which he considers the only available (and reliable) source of knowledge. He rejects Plato’s rationalistic foundation in favor of a scientific, empirical method of enquiry. This leads to the first



particularity of Aristotelian ethics: the importance of human animality. Aristotle calls humans ‘the best thing possible out of all animals’ (1141a35). He does make some distinctions, particularly in the *Metaphysics* I.1, where he states that ‘the animals other than man live by appearances and memories, and have but little of connected experience; but the human race lives also by art and reasonings’ (*Meta.* 980b25-28).<sup>208</sup> Yet, in Book X.8 he speaks of the shared ‘genus’ of animality, ‘the common nature’ shared by horses and humans, albeit ‘very differently.’ For Aristotle, investigating the nature of our animality provides the answers Plato sought in the heavens; notably, the consideration of how different animals naturally seek out their own good. Aristotle refers to this natural inclination to self-care in *Eth.Nic.* VI.8: ‘Hence the fact that people say some kinds of animals are wise, i.e. those that clearly have a capacity for forethought about their own lives’ (1141a27-28). Aristotle’s emphasis on reason does not undermine his insistence upon human animality; it merely qualifies it. Aristotle may revise the pure rationality of Plato, but he does not reject it altogether. On the contrary, the distinctly human aspect of our happiness arises from the *logos*, the one aspect particular to humans.

### **3.1.1.3 Artistic Imprecision over Scientific Precision**

Because Aristotle recognizes that ethics, like life, is a messy, imprecise enterprise, the practice of ethics is therefore less scientific than artistic in nature. Despite the systematic nature of the *Eth.Nic.*, Aristotle admits the decidedly experiential, imprecise character of ethical enquiry. ‘Let it be agreed,’ he says, ‘that everything one says about practical undertakings has to be said, not with precision, but in rough

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<sup>208</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago IL: Open Court Publishing, 2001), maintains that Aristotle was not saying ‘that rationality was not itself an animal property, but rather a property that separates humans from their animality’ (5).

outline' (1104a1-3). His celebrated doctrine of the mean provides a good example of this imprecision:

It is not easy to define how and with whom and on what grounds and how long one should be angry, and up to what point one does correctly in so doing and where error begins.... Now how far and in what way someone must overstep to be blameworthy is not easy to set out by principle, since what matters here are the details of the case, and the judgment lies in perception. (1126a32-34, b2-4)

In point of fact, Aristotle does not distinguish sharply between science and ethics; in trying to discover the good for human beings, he is not asking an ethical question rather than a scientific question. However, this does not lead him to view ethics as a set of equations that invariably yield tidy answers, but as a journey with unexpected twists, something being newly created each moment. His recognition of the importance of the particularities of life, as we mentioned above, further underscores the inexact nature of the endeavor: 'But if what one says universally is like this, what one says about particulars is even more lacking in precision; for it does not fall under any expertise or under any set of rules – the agents themselves have to consider the circumstances relating to the occasion' (1104a6-9). Moreover, ethics is not theoretical; it should help us to actually live well. The human *telos* is not merely virtue, but virtuous activity (1098b30ff). These three particularities – monism, empiricism, and artistic imprecision – underlay Aristotle's ethical enterprise.

### **3.1.2 Ethical Foundations in the *Nicomachean Ethics***

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is a philosophical inquiry into the nature of the good life for a human being. Aristotle states his conception of goodness in the opening sentence of the *Eth.Nic.*: 'Every sort of expert knowledge and every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking, seems to seek some good. Because of that, people are right to affirm that the good is "that which all things seek"' (1094a1). The required

characteristics of the ultimate good, which Aristotle (like Plato) calls *eudaimonia*, are its being complete, final, self-sufficient and continuous.

### **3.1.2.1 *Eudaimonia* and the Function Argument**

To discover the nature of human happiness, it is necessary to determine the *telos* of a human being, as a person's happiness will consist in fulfilling this natural end toward which their being is directed. This end or natural 'function' must be something that is specific to human beings, something essential to our basic humanity. According to Aristotle, the one activity unique to humanity is the ability to reason, the employment of the highest part of the soul – the rational. 'A human being's function we posit as being a kind of life,' he states, 'and this life as being activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a good man to perform these well and finely' (1098a8-10). Although the 'lower animals' have feelings, sensations, and the like, humans are the only animals able to make rational judgments. Human happiness, therefore, consists in activity of the soul according to reason, which is to function properly as a human. In practical terms, this activity is expressed through ethical virtue, when a person directs his actions according to reason.

### **3.1.2.2 Aristotle's Definition of Moral Virtue**

In Book II, Aristotle addresses the subjects of virtue, a concise summary of which can be found in his formal definition: 'Virtue, then,' he says, 'is a disposition issuing in decisions, depending on intermediacy of the kind relative to us, this being determined by rational prescription and in the way in which the wise person would determine it' (1106b36-1107a2).<sup>209</sup> Each element of this definition is important. Virtue is not

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<sup>209</sup> While Broadie and Rowe translate *aretē* as 'excellence,' I will use 'virtue' for the sake of continuity.

simply an isolated action; rather, it is a disposition, a habit of acting well. For an action to be virtuous a person must do it deliberately, knowing what he is doing and deciding upon it, and doing it because it is a noble action. In each specific situation, the virtuous action is a mean between two extremes. Finally, prudence or practical wisdom is necessary for ethical virtue because it is the intellectual virtue by which the mean specific to each situation may be ascertained. Aristotle distinguishes two types of virtue: the intellectual virtues, which pertain to the rational part of the soul, and the moral virtues, which pertain to the irrational parts of the soul (1103a1-10).

### **3.1.2.3 Disposition and Habituation**

In II.5, Aristotle distinguishes three components of the soul with regards to virtue: ‘Now since the things that occur in the soul fall into three things, i.e. affections, capacities, and dispositions, virtue will be one of these’ (1105b19-20). He thinks neither of the former two items can be human virtues, however, because the virtues are that with respect to which we are praised or blamed, and these must be modes of choice or involve choice in some way: ‘Again, we are angry and afraid without decision, whereas the virtues are kinds of decisions, or anyway involve decision’ (1106a3-4). As neither affections nor capacities involve choice, the virtues must therefore be *hexeis*, dispositions or states of character: ‘As for dispositions, it is in terms of these that we are well or badly disposed in relation to the affections, as for example in relation to becoming angry, if we are violently or sluggishly disposed, we are badly disposed – and similarly too in relation to the other things in question’ (1105b25-29).

Are all *hexeis* virtuous? Defective states of character are also *hexeis*, but they are tendencies to have inappropriate feelings. The significance of Aristotle's

characterization of these states as *hexeis* is his decisive rejection of the thesis of strict intellectualism, found throughout Plato's early dialogues and mentioned earlier, which states that virtue is nothing but a kind of knowledge, and vice nothing but a lack of knowledge. Although Aristotle frequently draws analogies between the crafts and the virtues (and similarly between physical health and *eudaimonia*), he insists that the virtues differ from the crafts and all branches of knowledge in that the former involve appropriate emotional responses and are not purely intellectual conditions.

The virtues are acquired, Aristotle claims, through a process of habituation. They are not inborn, nor are they acquired by any natural process that does not involve our own activity, as well as the activity of parents and other elders. This is because 'we acquire the virtues through having first engaged in the activities' (1103a31-32):

For it is through acting as we do in our dealings with human beings that some of us become just and others unjust, and through acting as we do in frightening situations becoming habituated to fearing or being confident, that some of us become courageous and some of us cowardly... We may sum up by saying just that dispositions come about from activities of a similar sort. (1103b16-23)

Virtue is acquired by doing virtuous acts. However, it is not enough that a person have the knack, the know-how, or even the habit of doing what the virtuous person does; she must also do them virtuously (excellently); that is, they must be done as the virtuous person would do them. This involves both discrete actions and the state of character revealed through these actions. For Aristotle, action must be coupled with intention.

With regards to intention, it is also important to consider what it means for an action to be voluntary, since only voluntary actions can be virtuous. For an action to be involuntary, there must be some external principle causing the action and the person must not contribute anything to the action. An action done through fear is only

partially voluntary, and an action done through ignorance may have different degrees of voluntariness, depending on whether or not the person would have wanted to do it if he had known what he was doing. As noted above, a proper intention is necessary for virtuous action. Intention is not a desire, a wish or an opinion, but rather a deliberate and predetermined plan of action.

#### **3.1.2.4 The Doctrine of the Mean**

Furthermore, Aristotle views virtue as a *hexis* in *mesotēs*, a disposition intermediate between two other states – one involving excess, the other involving deficiency. In this respect, the virtues are no different from technical skills: every skilled worker knows how to avoid excess and deficiency, and is in a condition intermediate between two extremes. Aristotle applies the same topography to every ethical virtue: all are located on a map that places the virtues between states of excess and deficiency: ‘Virtue is a kind of mean, as it aims at what is intermediate’ (1103b21). Aristotelian virtues are mean states in two principal ways. First, they are members of a triad, centered along a line of polarity whose termini are extreme and inappropriate modes of behavior: ‘It is intermediacy between two bad states, one involving excess, the other involving deficiency’ (1107a2-3). Second, they are mean states because they generate passions and actions that, relative to those of its correlated vices, demonstrate some sort of intermediate response: ‘Virtue has to do with affections and actions, things in which excess, and deficiency, go astray’ (1106b24-25). As both actions and affections may err towards either excess or deficiency, virtue will be the state that ‘both finds and chooses the intermediate’ (1107a6).

Complicating Aristotle’s account of the mean is how the moral agent arrives at the intermediate, particularly given the imprecise nature of moral enquiry: ‘Let it be

agreed that everything one says about practical undertakings has to be said, not with precision, but in rough outline' (1104a2-3). Instead of a predetermined solution, 'the agents themselves have to consider the circumstances relating to the occasion' (1104a8-9). In each situation, the intermediate will consist of 'proportionate amounts' arising from the particular scenario (1104a19). To use Aristotle's own example, there is no universal rule, for example, about how much food an athlete should eat, and it would be absurd to infer from the fact that ten pounds is too much and two pounds too little for me that one should eat six pounds (1106a33-b5).

Aristotle does not fully commit to either the proportionate or the mathematical position of the formulation of the mean. On the one hand, Aristotle does speak mathematically: 'With everything continuous and divisible, it is possible to take a greater and a lesser and an equal amount' (1106a26-28). Yet he immediately speaks against a mathematical precision, 'either with reference to the object itself or relative to us' (1106a28). He maintains that 'this is not one thing, nor is it the same for all' (1106a33) and that 'the intermediate, that is, not in the object, but relative to us' (1106b8). There are, however, two points that Aristotle explicitly affirms: hitting the mean involves getting it right, and getting it right involves practical wisdom.

The first point appears, in a way, to be Aristotle's attempt to navigate between the poles of precision and approximation. Whether the approach is mathematical or not, Aristotle emphasizes that the result is somehow *correct*; that is, the mean 'is praised and gets it right', thus embodying two features of virtue (1106b26-27). As Aristotle struggles to identify the measurable and quantifiable aspect of the mean, he continues to stress the 'correctness' of the virtuous response: 'doing [the virtuous act] to the person one should, to the extent one should, when one should, for the reason one should, and in the manner one should' (1109a27-29). However, arriving at this

response is complicated, as ‘it is not easy to determine not only how, but with whom, in what sorts of circumstances and for how long’ (1109b15-17). Aristotle frankly states that while one may err in many different ways, there is ‘only one way of getting it right’ (1106b31-21). Thus, the second point of the Aristotelian mean is that its difficulties require practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), as the mean is ‘determined by rational prescription and in the way in which the wise person (*phronimos*) would determine it’ (1107a1-2). Finding the virtuous response, even for the wise person, is difficult, ‘for such things depend on the particular circumstances, and the judgement of them lies in our perception’ (1109b24-25). Indeed, Aristotle admits that ‘getting it right is a rare thing’ (1109a30). Finding the Aristotelian mean in any given situation is neither mechanical nor thoughtless; it requires a full and detailed acquaintance with the circumstances and the phronetic ability to correctly assess them.

Having established a foundation of Aristotle’s thinking on ethical virtue in general, the focus now turns to the particular virtue of temperance.

### **3.1.3 The Account of Temperance in the *Nicomachean Ethics***

For Aristotle, temperance is the virtue concerned with the non-rational parts of the human soul (1117b25). In general, Aristotle limits his treatment of temperance to three chapters at the conclusion of Book III, where it sits as a companion piece to his treatment of the virtue of courage in III.6-9. However, occurring throughout the *Eth.Nic.* are various references to temperance which, when read alongside the account of III.10-12, provide a fuller picture of its place in Aristotle’s ethical system. His ‘narrow’ account of temperance will be considered first, followed by the ‘broad’ account.



### 3.1.3.1 The ‘Narrow’ Account of Temperance (III.10-12)

#### A) Book III.10 – The Sphere of Temperance

In III.10, Aristotle opens his treatment of temperance with three assertions. First, he states that it (along with fortitude) pertains to the irrational parts of the soul (1117b23-24). This identifies temperance as a moral rather than intellectual virtue. Second, he further identifies temperance as ‘a mean with regards to pleasures’ (*mesotēs esti peri hēdonas*) (1117b24-25). Two things stand out here. One, temperance (like the other virtues) is a mean state. Two, the subject, or sphere of the virtue of temperance, is ‘pleasures’. He also notes that ‘it is less concerned, and in a different way, with pains’, and that intemperance (*akolasia*) is concerned with them as well (1117b26-27). Thus, temperance is a moral virtue revealed as a mean state dealing with pleasures and, to some degree, with pains (as yet unidentified).<sup>210</sup>

Third, he carries out a four-step process of delineating this sphere of temperance.<sup>211</sup> In keeping of his view of temperance as concerned with the *epithumetikon*, he first separates bodily pleasures from ‘pleasures of the soul’, removing from consideration those related to money, learning, honor, friendship or mere chatter (1117b28-1118a3). He eliminates the pleasures derived solely from sight, smell, and sound, as ‘pleasure does not occur from these senses among animals except incidentally’, as indicators of the object of their desire (1118a1-26). He then subtracts taste from consideration, as an appreciation of certain tastes is rooted more in our humanity than our animality, and temperance deals with those pleasures which we share with other animals (1118a26-32). Finally, he removes those pleasures ‘most

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<sup>210</sup> In his *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.I. Litzinger, O.P. (South Bend IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1993), Thomas Aquinas notes that these are ‘the sorrows that arise from the absence of pleasures’ (¶598, 196). It is possible that he says this because he has read forward to the second part of III.11.

<sup>211</sup> Howard Curzer later notes, in his *Aristotle and the Virtues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), that Aristotle typically follows this pattern of ‘narrowing’ in his treatment of the individual virtues (66).

appropriate to free men’ – the pleasures of physical activity and those concerning the whole body, such as massage with its ‘rubbing and warming’ (1118b3-8). This leaves only the pleasures of food, drink, and sex (1118b9). Aristotle has now isolated the physical processes required by physical necessity and involved in self-propagation, though he does not say this explicitly.

Throughout this chapter, Aristotle ties two elements together: the rooting of these pleasures in our animality, and the consequently serious nature of their being allowed to rule. Their gratifications ‘seem to be servile and brutish’ (1118a25-26); because touch is the sense ‘most widely shared’ and ‘shared with animals’, intemperance is ‘justly a matter for reproach’ (1118b2-3). More importantly because it fails to engage our rationality, intemperance ‘does not exist in man as belonging to what is proper to him’ (1118b3-4). To prioritize these is to prioritize our animality, which is ‘bestial’ (1118b5). In his commentary on the *Eth.Nic.*, Aquinas uses even stronger language, saying that intemperance is ‘really despicable’ and ‘possesses the most disgusting shamefulness’, whereby ‘man is rendered notoriously evil and blameworthy.’<sup>212</sup> With temperance newly circumscribed, Aristotle moves on to consider the various manifestations of the virtue.

## **B) Book III.11 – Different Appetites and Different Types of Persons**

In III.11, Aristotle explores the vice-virtue-vice triad in more detail, discussing the various types of appetites and persons. He first makes a distinction between ‘peculiar’ and ‘shared’ appetites:

Of the appetites, some seem to be shared, others peculiar and acquired; so e.g. the appetite for nourishment is natural to us, since everyone has an appetite for nourishment when they lack it... but as for the appetite for this or that sort of food, not everyone has that. (1118b9-13)

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<sup>212</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, 201 (¶616).

Taking excessive pleasure in the ‘peculiar’ sensual matters Aristotle calls self-indulgence or intemperance (*akolasia*). This may be manifest in three distinct ways: ‘For given that people are called lovers of such-and-such either because they enjoy the sorts of things one shouldn’t, or because they enjoy things more than most people do, or because they don’t enjoy them in the way one should – well, the self-indulgent go to excess in all respects’ (1118b21-25). They err on the object – ‘enjoying the things one shouldn’t’; they err on degree – ‘enjoying things more than one should’; and they err on manner – ‘not enjoying them in the way one should.’ The self-indulgent, says Aristotle, go wrong in all respects (1118b24-25). They also suffer pain when their desires go unfulfilled and even when their appetites arise, even if they are eventually filled. Thus, the *akolastos* feels pain both at the absence of the object and with the desire for the object. The *sōphron*, on the other hand, is the opposite of the *akolastos*; what the *akolastos* most enjoys will disgust the *sōphrōn* (1119a12-13). The *sōphrōn* will be open to what Aristotle calls ‘proper pleasures’: they are conducive to health and fitness; are pleasant; serve the fine; are within his means; and are as the ‘correct prescription lays down’ (1119a16-20).

While the *akolastos* struggles against the peculiar appetites, some struggle against the natural appetites. These Aristotle calls ‘brutish’ and ‘servile’, noting that few people go wrong with regard to the natural appetites, and only in one direction (1118b15-21). According to Aristotle, the vice of insufficient desire for pleasure hardly exists – indeed, it has no proper name, although Aristotle ventures to call it insensibility (*anaesthesia*). When present, it takes the form either of innate insensitivity to pleasure or of asceticism, limiting the appetites to less than their proper function in relation to life as a whole. Although rare, they are cause for concern: ‘For to be insensate like this is not human – all the other animals too, after

all, make distinctions between foods, and enjoy some but not others. If there is someone to whom nothing is pleasant, and nothing is preferable to anything else, he would be a long way from being human' (1119a6-11; also 1119a8).<sup>213</sup> This raises an important and easily-overlooked point: To feel pleasure at these things *is* human. Aristotle concludes with the observation that in all matters pertaining to pleasure, the temperate person follows the mean. He does not enjoy what is most pleasant to the self-indulgent and feels no pain, or only to a moderate degree, when his appetites are unfulfilled. He desires only pleasures that are within his means, which are compatible with the fine and which contribute to his health and well-being.

Several words contain particular significance. The *sōphrōn* will have 'moderate desires' (*orexetai metriōs*). Interestingly, Aquinas translates this as 'according to right measure', which he explains as arising from 'right reason.'<sup>214</sup> The ability to perceive the right measure of something echoes Aristotle's discussion of 'willing', wherein he describes virtue as a measure: 'What most distinguishes the good person is his ability to see what is true in every set of circumstances, being like a carpenter's rule or measure (*kanōn kai metron*) for them' (1113a30-33). Canon is defined by 'an accepted principle or rule; a criterion or standard of judgment; a body of principles, rules, standards, or norms.' That the Greek *kanōn*, which translates here as 'rule' or 'measuring stick', is connected with *metron* suggests the calculative, evaluative, almost prescriptive nature of this concept. Right reason provides the *sōphrōn* (and the virtuous in general) with the ability to recognize a 'recipe' of sorts for each particular situation. This section also highlights the connotative overlap in Aristotle's use of *metrios* and *sōphron* – both of which are translated as 'moderate.'

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<sup>213</sup> While Aristotle may have found this vice almost fanciful, the high occurrence of eating disorders in contemporary Western culture indicates that Aristotle's *anaesthesia*, or something akin to it, is by no means unknown.

<sup>214</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, 206 (¶633-634).

While Aristotle probably does not intend for these terms to be interchangeable, the manner of their use highlights their similarities. Temperance, although officially defined from the standpoint of intemperance, is still *sōphrosynē*, with the attendant richness of its connections with measure and mean.

### **C) Book III.12 – The Intemperate Appetite of the *Akolastos***

In III.12, Aristotle considers the nature of the self-indulgent appetite in greater detail. In contrast to cowardice, which is motivated by probable pain, self-indulgence is motivated by pleasure and desire. Because pain upsets and destroys the nature of man, but pleasure does not, the decisions and actions of the *akolastos* are always voluntary, as they are due to desire and do not involve danger or the prospect of self-harm. Thus, self-indulgence is ‘more voluntary than cowardice, and more reproachable’ (1119a23).

Furthermore, wanton self-indulgence in adults is similar to the naughtiness of children, as both are governed entirely by their appetites and desires. They are unrestrained by rationality; whereas in the virtuous person, rationality and appetite cooperate: ‘Hence in the moderate person the appetitive should be in harmony with reason; for the fine is the goal for both, and the moderate person has appetite for the things one should, in the way one should, and when – which is what the rational prescription also lays down’ (1119b15-18). *Akolasia* resembles the errors of children in many ways: it desires shameful things; it can become large; it is characteristic of children, who ‘live according to appetite’; it is unstable and indiscriminate; and its activity augments congenital tendencies; and perhaps most importantly, it is capable of ‘knocking out’ the ‘capacity for rational calculation’ (1119a36-b7). Conversely, in the *sōphrōn*, the appetites will be ‘moderate’ (*metrioi*) and ‘few.’ They should be

ready to obey and be controlled by the ruling element (1119b7), ‘offering no opposition to rational calculation’ (1119b12). They will act ‘in accordance with what reason prescribes’ and will ‘be in harmony with reason’ (*symphōnein toi logoi*) (1119b15-16).

This has clear echoes of the progression of *Republic* IV. For Plato also the appetites are ‘big and strong’ and try to ‘enslave and rule’ (442a). They should be ‘in harmony’ with the rulers (430e). Temperance is ‘order, mastery of pleasures’ (430e). Desires should be simple, measured, and directed by calculation (431c). They are to be controlled by the superior elements (431d), which will result in harmony (431e).

### **3.1.3.2 The ‘Broad’ Account of Temperance (VI.5, II.7, IV.3-4, VII)**

While Aristotle’s focused treatment of temperance in III.10-12 centers on the physical appetites, there are occasions in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where he examines the virtue in a broader manner. These are found in three indirect treatments of the virtue that center on the relationship between temperance and three other moral concepts: practical wisdom, magnanimity, and continence.

#### **A) Temperance and Practical Wisdom**

In VI.5, Aristotle defines practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) as the way in which people ‘deliberate about the good life in general’ regarding situations ‘where no exact technique applies’ (1140a28-9). He distinguishes practical wisdom from other intellectual virtues: it is not skillcraft (*technē*), because action is not the same as production (1140b2-4). It is not intellectual accomplishment (*epistēmē*), because actions ‘can be otherwise’ and action is not demonstration (1140b2-4). Thus, it does not point towards an external end (as is the case with production), because doing well

‘itself serves as end’ (1140b7). Thus, it is a disposition ‘accompanied by rational prescription, true, in the sphere of human goods, relating to action’ (1140b20-22). And it is therefore the intellectual virtue most closely tied to the moral virtues, where decisions result in actions, and actions can indeed be otherwise. It is not the univocal judgments of *epistēmē* that are corrupted by excessive pleasure, but the open-ended and practical decisions guided by *phronēsis*. Thus, it is quite important that practical wisdom not be corrupted and become unable to do its job.

Temperance, says Aristotle, has a particular role in the safeguarding of practical wisdom. He outlines their relationship etymologically: ‘This is why we give temperance (*sōphrosynē*) its name, as something that preserves wisdom [*sōzei tēn phronēsin*] (1140b11-12).’ Aristotle states that practical wisdom receives its very name from temperance (whose name, *sōphrosynē*, literally means ‘saving *phronesis*’), because this reflects the true nature of practical wisdom, as something concerned with the doing of good versus bad things. *Sōphrosynē* – literally ‘sound-*phronēsis*’ – is the savior (*sōzei*) or preserver of *phronēsis*.<sup>215</sup> Thus, *sōphrosynē* has a special, almost reciprocal relationship with *phronēsis* instead of *epistēmē*. This differs significantly from Socrates’ view that the virtues are forms of *epistēmē*.<sup>216</sup>

Moreover, it is more than semantic gymnastics: ‘And it does preserve the sort of belief in question. What is pleasant and painful does not corrupt, or distort, every sort of belief’ (1140b13-14). Because pleasure and pain can (and do) distort one’s capacity for judgment (although not one’s capacity for epistemic evaluations), temperance is necessary to prevent this from happening. When inordinate pleasure or pain distorts one’s vision of the true and good end of life, then practical wisdom cannot make an accurate assessment of one’s choices. But when the *sōphronoi* makes

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<sup>215</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, implies that practical wisdom is called *phronēsis* to align it etymologically with *sōphrosynē* (371, ¶1169).

<sup>216</sup> See *Charmides*, particularly 164-171.

decisions, practical wisdom is allowed to fulfill its task. These people, says Aristotle, ‘clearly have a capacity for forethought about their own lives’ (1141a28-9). Thus, it is temperance which safeguards the pursuit of virtue itself.

## **B) Temperance, Magnanimity, and Humility**

Aristotle first mentions the relationship between temperance (the ‘unnamed virtue’)<sup>217</sup> and magnanimity (*megalopsychia*) in his preliminary discussion on the moral virtues in II.7.<sup>218</sup> This virtue is ‘concerned with honour on a small scale’ (1107b26) and is exhibited by ‘desiring honour to the proper amount’ (1107b27).<sup>219</sup> He both identifies temperance (*sōphrosynē*) by name and expands upon this connection in IV.3 where he discusses its relationship to *megalopsychia*: ‘The person who is worthy of small (*mikrōn*) things and thinks himself worthy of them is moderate (*sōphron*),<sup>220</sup> but not *megalopsychos*’ (1123b5-6).

However, it is not merely ‘small’ things to which the *sōphron* person should aspire, but moderate (*metriōn*) things (1123b11). This association appears again in IV.4, where it renders its possessor ‘disposed as one should in relation to moderate (*metria*) things’ (1125b4). This person, says Aristotle, will be ‘indifferent to honour’ and may be described as ‘decent and moderate (*metriōn kai sōphrona*)’ (1125b13-14). *Sōphrosynē* is thus explicitly connected to a moderate, well-proportioned, relationship with honor. And in calling this virtue ‘the intermediate (*mesotētos*)’ (1125b17),

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<sup>217</sup> Ronna Burger, *Aristotle’s Dialogue with Socrates: On the Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008) observes that this virtue is unnamed not because it is rarely seen (as with ‘insensibility’, 1119a1-5), but because of ‘the infinite flexibility of the target at which it aims’ (132).

<sup>218</sup> Some thorough and varied treatments of *megalopsychia* include W.F.R. Hardie, “Magnanimity” in Aristotle’s “Ethics”, *Phronesis* 23:1 (1978), 63-79; Roger Crisp, ‘Aristotle on Greatness of Soul,’ in *Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Richard Kraut (London: Blackwell, 2006); and Curzer, *Virtues*.

<sup>219</sup> Note Aristotle’s equation of the ‘proper amount’ and ‘on a small scale.’

<sup>220</sup> Interestingly, W.D. Ross, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963) translates *sōphron* here as ‘temperate.’



temperance is again connected, in the broad sense, with moderation and intermediacy. Thus, book IV provides some of the clearest connections between the ideas of *sōphrosynē*, *metrios*, and *mesotēs* – temperance, moderation, and the intermediacy of the mean. Aristotle also connects *sōphrosynē* to the concept of symmetry and proper proportion, saying that small people are ‘well-proportioned’ (*symmetroi*) rather than beautiful (1123b7). Temperance is thus connected to being – and to knowing oneself to be – moderate, well-proportioned, intermediate, and symmetrical in one’s relationship to honor. This section also highlights the virtue’s connection to the pre-Socratic, religious, Homeric connotation of knowing one’s place in the midst of lives of valor. Curzer states:

Aristotle’s treatment of *megalopsychia* constitutes a particularly interesting juncture in the history of ideas: the point at which the vestigial, Homeric value of greatness and grandeur seems to clash with the newer value of moderation and the mean. Aristotle tries to reconcile these two apparently incompatible values by formally defining *megalopsychia* as a combination of greatness and self-knowledge.<sup>221</sup>

Temperance thus participates in the blending and balancing of two very different worldviews and the virtues they generate.

Reading these passages together, this broad conception of temperance is characterized by three things.<sup>222</sup> First is the particular *state of worthiness*. The *sōphron* person is worthy of *mikra* and *metria* things – not large things, as this intrudes into the realm of *megalopsychia*. Second is the possession of the *proper self-knowledge* – a *recognition* of being worthy of small or moderate things. This person comprehends his state of worthiness for exactly what it is. Third is the *conformity of desires* to this self-knowledge. He does not aspire to a station not his own; he is content to be – and to be seen – just where he is. Thus, being *sōphron* brings together

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<sup>221</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 121.

<sup>222</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, here reads temperance ‘in the sense that temperance is taken for any moderation whatsoever’ (237, ¶738).

one's place in the *polis*, an accurate knowledge of that place, and the proper correspondence of one's desire for honour. Even for the *megalopsychoi*, however, the relationship between *megalopsychia* and honor is less about honor itself than about the state of abundant virtue that occasions such honor.<sup>223</sup> This view may plausibly be read from Aristotle's further remarks in IV.3: 'He [the *megalopsychos*] will bear himself with moderation (*metriōs*) towards wealth and power and all good or evil fortune, whatever may befall him, and will be neither over-joyed by good fortune nor over-pained by evil. For not even about honor does he care very much' (1124a13-17). Although honor is the highest tribute available to Aristotle and his contemporaries, it is merely the outward manifestation of one's possession of virtue.<sup>224</sup>

So, these three things emerge – one's state of worthiness, an awareness of this state of worthiness, and an appropriate desire for a corresponding amount of honor. Together, they suggest a possible relationship between temperance and what might legitimately be called humility, although Aristotle is generally believed to have counted humility as a vice. Certainly, he counts neither of the Greek words commonly associated with humility – *mikropsychia* and *tapeinosis* – as virtues. The word used in the vice-virtue-vice triad of IV.4, *mikropsychia*, is often translated as 'humility', although 'pusillanimity' is also common.<sup>225</sup> A more literal rendering is 'small-souledness', which reflects its etymological opposition to *megalopsychia* (literally 'great-souledness'). The *mikropsychos*, says Aristotle, is 'the man who thinks he deserves lesser things than he deserves – whether the things be great, ordinary, or little' (1123b9-10). *Mikropsychia* keeps one's mind focused upon petty things, rather than on the great achievements of which he might be capable (1123b12-13); it prevents him from aspiring to great things, and likewise to great virtue.

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<sup>223</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 123.

<sup>224</sup> Tadie, 64.

<sup>225</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, uses 'humility' (121); Broadie and Rowe, *Eth.Nic.*, use 'little-souled.'

Hutchison correctly says: ‘The humble man thinks he deserves less than he does, a trait which Aristotle disdains; he would prefer us to be vain than humble, because humility is commoner, and therefore worse.’<sup>226</sup> Moreover, the *micropsychos* is ‘deficient in regard to his own worth’ (1123b24); he is self-deluded. Thus, the primary error for the *micropsychos* is an error of understanding; he will consistently underestimate and undervalue himself, whatever his state of genuine merit.

However, the word most commonly associated with classical ‘humility’ is not *mikropsychia*, but *tapeinosis*.<sup>227</sup> *Tapeinosis* has several connotations, largely negative: as smallness (as opposed to largeness); as lowness with regard to the earth; as the degradation of defeat; and as attendant to one’s state in slavery and subjugation.<sup>228</sup> For Aristotle (as for most others in classical Greece), the *tapeinoi* are the ‘little people’, the ones who truly have no value. Unlike *mikropsychia*, *tapeinosis* is not an intellectual issue. It is not having a low opinion of yourself that makes you *tapeinos*; it is having a low estate in life. Nevertheless, it occasionally has positive content. As discussed above, the *Laws* depicts *tapeinosis* in contrast to the *hubris* of those who look only to themselves.<sup>229</sup> Joseph Tadie also discusses other constructive glosses of *tapeinotēs* within the classical tradition. In addition to the passage in the *Laws* 715-716, he discusses Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound*, where Prometheus’ punishment ‘is only the wages of too boastful speech. You still have not learned humility, nor do you bend before misfortune.’<sup>230</sup> Prometheus has overstepped his mortal limits and displayed a prideful arrogance, which has greatly offended Zeus, the

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<sup>226</sup> D.S. Hutchinson, ‘Ethics’, in *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 195-232 (227).

<sup>227</sup> For an extended study of *tapeinotēs* from the classical period through late modernity, see Tadie.

<sup>228</sup> Tadie, 31-9.

<sup>229</sup> See 2.5.4 of this paper for my discussion of this passage and its positive import; see also Tadie, 53-5.

<sup>230</sup> Aeschylus, ‘Prometheus Bound’, in *Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1, eds. David Grene and Richard Lattimore (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 320-5.

immortal. Learning humility (*tapeinosis*) is his only recourse if he wants to escape his punishment.

The question remains: does Aristotle have a conception of what might be plausibly called ‘humility’? He certainly commends nothing resembling Christian humility (understood variously as submission, modesty, or Christ-like meekness), and considers it the greater of two evils in the triad of IV.3. He would likely never conceive of humility as a virtue *per se*. However, he does describe a particular combination of being and mindset, which stands contrary to *hubris* and excessive pride. It *is* virtuous to possess a proper understanding of your worthiness and position, and to bring one’s aspirations into agreement with this understanding. Whatever the rendering of *mikropsychia*, common sense suggests that Aristotle here is recommending, particularly for the *sōphron* man who possesses the ‘unnamed virtue’, some version of humility.

### **C) The Distinction between Temperance and Continence**

Whereas Book III.10-12 discusses virtuous and vicious dispositions regarding the physical appetites (temperance and self-indulgence, respectively), Book VII introduces two other possibilities: continence (*enkrateia*) and incontinence (*akrasia*). Some persons, having reached a decision about what to do on a particular occasion, experience some counter-pressure brought on by an appetite for pleasure, or anger, or some other emotion; and this contrary influence is not completely under the control of reason. Within this category, some are typically able to resist these counter-rational pressures. Such people are not virtuous, although they generally do what a virtuous person does; here is another example of the importance of the inner state of reason and order. Aristotle calls these persons continent (*enkrates*), *possessing strength of*

*will*. Others are less successful in resisting these counter-pressures. They are *incontinent* (*akrates*), *possessing weakness of will*. Aristotle distinguished temperance from continence in a twofold manner. First, he acknowledges (*contra* Socrates) that *akrasia* does exist; second, he distinguishes continence (*contra* Plato) from true virtue, temperance in particular. These states are neither as blameworthy as the vices nor as praiseworthy as the virtues.

Plato commonly renders *enkrateia* as ‘self-control’; it is one of several categorizations of temperance, notably in *Republic* IV.<sup>231</sup> Aristotle, however, treats it as a category all its own while retaining the connection to temperance.<sup>232</sup> Continence differs from true temperance in the internal state and motivations of the person at the time of their actions: while both the continent and the temperate persons will perform actions that align with and reflect practical reason, only the temperate one will do so easily, taking wholesome pleasure in the act. Aristotle’s use of the term *enkrateia* reflects its derivation from *kratos*, meaning ruler or ruled. The *enkrateis* will be struggling with his desires, experiencing them as subjects to be ruled, rather than as willing participants in the decisions of *phronēsis*. It is because of this struggle that continence merely ‘resembles’ true temperance (1152a1). This highlights the difference between the Platonic and Aristotelian views on temperance; whereas Plato defines temperance in the *Republic* IV as domination of the *epithumia* by the *logistikon* (430e6-9), this would only qualify as continence for Aristotle. Additionally, the charioteer of the *Phaedrus* who struggles with the unruly black horse displays only continence, not temperance.<sup>233</sup> He associates continence *per se* with the particular sphere of temperance, as they relate to the same pleasures, but not

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<sup>231</sup> See 431a, 442c.

<sup>232</sup> North notes that book VII ‘makes the first rigorous distinction in Greek thought between *sōphrosynē* and *enkrateia*’ (203).

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

in the same way (1148a14-17). Other instances of ‘continenence’ do exist, but they are associated to true continence by analogy (1148b12). Moreover, incontinence with respect to appetite is worse than with respect to temper (*thumos*), because the objects of appetite are merely ‘necessary’ and, unlike the objects of *thumos*, they do not participate in reason (1149a24-b3).

Furthermore, to the categories of temperance and continence, Aristotle adds ‘resistance’ (*karteria*). He acknowledges the ‘common view’ that both continence and resistance are considered praiseworthy (1145b8-11). It can be difficult, he says, to distinguish between the three (1145b14, 1146b12-13), as the common view tends to confuse them. This ‘resistance’ refers to the type of person who ‘can overcome even those [pleasures and pains] that most people are too weak not to give in to (1150a12-13).’ Although this sounds quite similar to self-control, it is actually even farther down the virtue-vice continuum, as it refers to merely withstanding one’s passions, rather than overcoming them. Resistance, for Aristotle, relates to self-control ‘as not being defeated is different from winning – which is why self-control is also a more desirable thing than resistance’ (1150a34-b2). This yields an insight central for later discussion. For Aristotle, there are some persons who are simply better at holding out against adverse pleasures; they have a high tolerance for the ‘pain’ of unfulfilled desires. This is associated not with the cultivation of any moral virtue, but is simply a result of one’s particular personality and nature.

Aristotle concedes that continence can be a good thing (1151b29), but it is more likely to reflect a battle with appetites that are both ‘strong and bad’, which is not indicative of true virtue (1146a9-16).<sup>234</sup> However, if there is to be a struggle, it is more fitting that it be with strong desires, since it is shameful to struggle against a

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<sup>234</sup> See also 1151b32-1152a6, 1102b25-28.

weak appetite, or none at all (1150a27-29). Aristotle also acknowledges that continence, acting on its own, may become problematic. He commends standing firm to the *correct* decision as opposed to just *any* decision (1151a29-a33). He warns that continence may do more harm than good when abstracted from the guidance of practical reason; if someone simply digs in their heels, they risk reinforcing a bad decision (1146a17-19). He labels these persons ‘stubborn’ and calls them ‘opinionated, uneducated, and boorish’. Although they may ‘resemble’ the continent, they instead display, not excessive appetites, but inflexible reason, and are not likely to change their minds (1151b5-13). For Aristotle, self-control must truly be led by reason if it is to have any value at all.

### **3.1.4 Three Particular Issues in Aristotle’s Account**

These examinations of Aristotle’s treatment of temperance highlight three distinctive contributions to the journey of this virtue. These are the drastic restriction of its sphere of activity, the distinction between temperance and continence, and its association with the doctrine of the mean.

#### **3.1.4.1. The Restriction of the Sphere of Temperance**

As previously discussed, Aristotle takes great pains in III.10 to precisely define the sphere of temperance.<sup>235</sup> Yet even his first references to temperance virtually define it in opposition to self-indulgence: ‘To the mean in some cases the deficiency, in some the excess is more opposed ... and not insensibility, which is a deficiency, but self-

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<sup>235</sup> See above, 3.1.3.1.A. Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ describes Aristotle’s version of *sōphrosynē* as ‘narrower, more specialized and better defined’ as compared to the Homeric and Platonic versions’ (4). I think this indicates an impoverished reading of Plato’s account of temperance, focusing solely upon one gloss of Platonic temperance – self-control as the virtue of the masses – in one of Plato’s dialogues. See MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ 2-3, and n.170 above.

indulgence, which is an excess, that is more opposed to temperance' (1108b36-1109a5) He continues:

We ourselves tend more naturally to pleasures, and hence are more easily carried away towards self-indulgence than towards propriety. We describe as contrary to the mean, then, rather the directions in which we more often go to great lengths; and therefore self-indulgence, which is an excess, is the more contrary to temperance. (1109a12-19)

Temperance is, both by its own nature and because of human nature, expressed in opposition to the human tendency towards self-indulgence. This association results in a distinctive contribution of Aristotelian temperance: the narrowing of the scope of the virtue. This narrowness stands in stark contrast to the expansive view of Platonic temperance, particularly in the *Charmides*.<sup>236</sup> What was, for Plato, an 'architectonic science' is now limited to the control of the most basic physical appetites.<sup>237</sup> While Aristotle may be commended for the precision he applied to the characterization and demarcation of the various virtues, his meticulous approach sacrifices complexity for the sake of clarity. Moreover, he is quite explicit in his limitation of the sphere of temperance to only those pleasures arising from our animality – a strictly physical set of appetites.<sup>238</sup>

#### **3.1.4.2 The Distinction between Temperance and Continenence**

The second particularity of Aristotle's treatment of temperance is its relationship to continence or self-control. It is important to remember that continence is not a virtue, as 'by talking about virtue in ways that sets its standard too high or too low, we

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<sup>236</sup> Burger comments, 'Every virtue, as it comes under examination in the Platonic dialogues, expands far beyond the bounds of its ordinary understanding; but *sōphrosynē* undergoes, in Plato's *Charmides*, an especially explosive expansion... Aristotle's account appears to go as far as possible in the opposite direction' (118).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 118-9.

<sup>238</sup> Most commentators have not attempted to enlarge this sphere. One dissenter is Curzer, *Virtues*; see 7.2.1 below.



diminish it in practice.’<sup>239</sup> The inner order and beauty of the temperate should not be equated with the internal struggle of the merely continent.<sup>240</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre interprets this as a mark of the superior nature of Aristotelian temperance over its Platonic predecessor, as ‘*enkrateia* is the quality of self-control and *sōphrosynē* is more and other than *enkrateia*.’<sup>241</sup>

The differences are subtle, and they bring subtlety to the discussion of virtue and bodily appetites. Robert Roberts notes that self-control may appear to be the morally superior choice, as it ‘seems to be a more rational state of mind or character than temperance, because it looks as though rationality is doing more work here, and doing it “on its own,” while in temperance the state of appetite is doing the “work” in place of reason.’ He continues:

This is perhaps a Kantian way of thinking about reason and appetite: reason is most active, and most in evidence, and most pure, when it is clearly distinguished from appetite, and it is most clearly distinguished when it is in opposition to appetite. Aristotle appeals to oppositional cases to establish that reason is *different* from appetite (*NE* 1.13, 1102b14–18), but he doesn’t think that the whole person is more rational when the two are disjoined.<sup>242</sup>

This is an important point in light of Aristotle’s eudaimonism. The mere exercise of self-control is clearly not sufficient for human happiness, ‘for the self-controlled person has to force himself not to indulge an appetite, and being conflicted in this way

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<sup>239</sup> Broadie and Rowe, *Eth.Nic.*, 55.

<sup>240</sup> Karen Stohr finds the ‘harmony thesis’ unacceptable and provides an alternate reading of Aristotle’s contrast between continence and virtue; see ‘Moral Cacophony: When Continence is a Virtue’, *The Journal of Ethics* 7 (2003), 339-63. While I am sympathetic to her valuation of the ‘pain’ appropriate to certain moral decisions, I do not think the ‘pain’ of conflicting moral goods is the same as the ‘pain’ Aristotle locates in the continent and incontinent persons.

<sup>241</sup> MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ 5. As noted earlier, I believe MacIntyre reads Platonic temperance in an unduly restricted fashion, selecting only one of the virtue’s facets from only one dialogue (the *Republic*). However, he is correct in recognizing the importance of Aristotle’s distinction between temperance and continence and its positive effect on the understanding of the virtue.

<sup>242</sup> Roberts, 101-2. Nancy Sherman believes that Kant allows for a deeper transformation of emotion and desire than the above (admittedly common) understanding allows; see *Making a Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 121-186, particularly 140-4.

is not a happy way of being.<sup>243</sup> This is especially evident when we consider the largely positive account of temperance found in the *Eth.Nic.* Far from the ‘privative motivational state’ given in his earlier *Eudemian Ethics*, which offers no idea of the ‘proper enjoyment of food and drink,’<sup>244</sup> the positive aspects of temperance are unpacked in the *Eth.Nic.*, notably as that which either contributes to, or is consistent with, health and fitness. For the temperate person, pleasure serves as an indicator of what is healthful, as the temperate person ‘delights in’ the pleasures of food, drink, and sex (1119a16-20).<sup>245</sup>

### 3.1.4.3 Temperance and the Doctrine of the Mean

The third area of particular interest is the relationship between temperance and the doctrine of the mean, which has been viewed as ‘foundational, in a larger sense.’<sup>246</sup> As discussed earlier, Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean is central to his ethical thought.<sup>247</sup> It locates each virtue between the vicious extremes of excess and deficiency, although proportionately rather than mathematically (1103b21, 1106a33-b8, 1107s2-3). It is also relative to the agent and the circumstances (1104a8-19, 1106a28-33). It is particular, in that there is only one way to get it right (1106b31, 1109a27-29) and yet is simultaneously imprecise (1104a23, 1109b15-17,24-25). Thus, ‘getting it right’ is a rare occurrence (1109a30).

Described as ‘the most famous (or notorious) part’ of Aristotle’s ethical theory<sup>248</sup> and ‘that most vulgarized notion of the *Ethics*’<sup>249</sup>, the doctrine has generated

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<sup>243</sup> Broadie and Rowe, *Eth.Nic.*, 55.

<sup>244</sup> Young, ‘Temperance,’ 115.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.* 116.

<sup>246</sup> North, 200.

<sup>247</sup> See 3.1.2.4 above.

<sup>248</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 2. See also Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 194.

<sup>249</sup> Jonathan Barnes, ‘Introduction’, *Nicomachaen Ethics* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004), xxii.

vigorous debate.<sup>250</sup> Its adherents call it ‘architectonic’<sup>251</sup>, structurally supporting his entire theory of character.<sup>252</sup> It describes – and attempts to account for – the range of moral behavior found within human action.<sup>253</sup> North, who perceives the doctrine of the mean as arising from ‘the traditional Greek feeling for moderation,’ also sees Aristotle as ‘seeking greater precision than he found in Plato’s reliance upon *phronēsis*.’<sup>254</sup> Its detractors lament its ‘practical vacuity’ and lack of ‘conceptual utility’,<sup>255</sup> which is rendered ‘platitudinous’ when factually applied.<sup>256</sup> They question whether the use of quantitative language conceals its emphasis on the *rightness* of an action as morally normative (cf. 1106b22-23).<sup>257</sup> This language also masks the connection of the mean to practical wisdom and ‘perception’ (*aesthesis*) (1109b23). One commentator speculates that the mean would not have passed muster should Aristotle have written a third work of ethics.<sup>258</sup>

While the academic debate is generally thoughtful and nuanced, it stands in danger of being eclipsed by the more common, somewhat intuitive tendency for the *doctrine of the mean* to be equated with the *doctrine of moderation*.<sup>259</sup> At first glance, this view appears to be easily refuted. Some interpret Aristotle as recommending a mean state *with regard to the passions*, not a *settled state of moderate passions*.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> J.O.Urmson, ‘Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean’, in Amélie O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1980), 157-70. .

<sup>251</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 47.

<sup>252</sup> Broadie and Rowe, 20.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>254</sup> North, 200n.9.

<sup>255</sup> Barnes, xxv.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, ‘The Central Doctrine of the Mean’, in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Richard Kraut (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 96-115 (109-14); see also Peter Losin, ‘Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean’, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4:3 (1987), 329-42. Porter makes a similar argument regarding Aquinas’ use of an Aristotelian conception of the mean (*Recovery*, 115-6).

<sup>258</sup> Barnes, xxv.

<sup>259</sup> When Broadie calls the doctrine ‘intuitively obvious to everyone’ (Broadie and Rowe, 20), this is, to my view, what people actually perceive about the doctrine’s moral import.

<sup>260</sup> J.O.Urmson, ‘Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean’, in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amélie O. Rorty (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1980), 157-70 (161); Howard J. Curzer, ‘Aristotle’s

The doctrine of the mean is ‘a disposition toward the mean, not a mean disposition’; and that is not the same as the doctrine of moderation. However, the two are not easily differentiated: the doctrine of moderation is neither contained within nor resultant from the doctrine of the mean, although they are ‘perfectly compatible.’<sup>261</sup> Others argue that they are distinct yet connected; the doctrine of the mean *is* ‘an outgrowth and generalization’ of the doctrine of moderation.<sup>262</sup> Thus, Aristotle was likely ‘a believer in the doctrine of moderation, sensibly interpreted.’<sup>263</sup> Yet this assumption becomes problematic when applied to ethical particulars:

If we are to give genuinely independent content to the notion of the mean amount of feeling, we would seem to end up with a *moderate* amount of feeling, and the doctrine of the mean would amount to the claim that if she has developed the disposition to do the right thing, then she will characteristically feel a moderate amount of feeling or emotion: she will not be either indifferent or highly worked up about what she is doing.<sup>264</sup>

While some consider this a call for regulating one’s responses, even the later Peripatetics held to the moderating aspects of *metriopatheia*.<sup>265</sup> This is significant because of the interpretation it superimposes upon the doctrine of the mean; that is, the virtuous response will be moderate (i.e. medium) in emotion and action.

Thirty years into his work with Aristotle, one commentator declares: ‘It might turn out to be false, but to dismiss the doctrine of the mean as trivial, foolish, metaphorical, or peripheral takes chutzpah.’<sup>266</sup> And indeed, the doctrine of the mean contains genuine insights. One is its acknowledgement that the virtue-vice relationship is not binary or ordinal.<sup>267</sup> Another is Aristotle’s emphasis on an agent-

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Account of the Virtue of Temperance in *Nicomachean Ethics* III.10-11’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 35:1 (1997), 5-25; Charles T. Young, ‘The Doctrine of the Mean’, *Topoi* 15 (1996), 89-99; Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 61 (emphasis mine).

<sup>261</sup> Urmson, 162.

<sup>262</sup> See Curzer, *Virtues*, 139 n.37.

<sup>263</sup> Urmson, 162.

<sup>264</sup> Annas, 61.

<sup>265</sup> Annas, 61 n.40 (citing T. Irwin as encouraging her towards this position), and Sorabji, 194-210.

<sup>266</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 49.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

specific mean, which shows interesting continuity with the Delphic aphorism ‘Know Thyself.’ One fascinating medico-biological basis for the doctrine of the mean connects it to *metriotēs*, defined as ‘equilibrium’ and ‘blend’ (*krēsis*).<sup>268</sup> This is particularly helpful because it highlights the dynamic nature of *metrios* and *meson*, which is essential for the mean to function responsively according to practical wisdom.<sup>269</sup> Yet even its staunchest defenders feel compelled to ‘rehabilitate it’ to increase ‘its plausibility and usefulness as an organizing principle.’<sup>270</sup> It is arguably ambiguous in its application and misleading in its implications. Despite its ethical insights, the doctrine of the mean contains significant challenges for moral reasoning.

### 3.1.5 Conclusions on Aristotelian Temperance

Aristotle’s treatment of temperance contains several distinctive contributions. He reconnects the moral life – particularly the area governed by temperance – with human animality, while pairing it with our particular rationality. It is true that brutishness, or animality without rationality, is one of the lowest possible fates for free men; yet the biological and empirical nature of Aristotle’s ethics arises directly from our embodied, creaturely nature. He strips temperance from its cardinal status via the dissolution of the tetrad, and he outlines the discrete spheres of each virtue, essentially limiting the scope of temperance to its ‘paradigm cases’ of food, drink, and sexual relations. He engages the ‘broader’ sense of temperance in both the relationship between temperance and practical reason and the connection of temperance and some form of humility (although the connection is implicit). He differentiates the sub-virtue of continence from the virtue of temperance, making explicit what was only implied by Plato. His overall treatment may be somewhat

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<sup>268</sup> Tracy, 335.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>270</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 1-2.

limited in scope compared to Plato's treatment of the virtue, but this distinction is central. Moreover, it highlights Aristotle's emphasis upon proper pleasure in the functioning of true virtue; virtue cannot exist where its exercise is painful. Finally, through its connection to the doctrine of the mean, temperance begins to be conflated with a static, unresponsive concept of moderation.

This is a different temperance from that in Plato: altered in status, restricted in scope, more clearly defined, less dynamic in nature, and exercised without struggle. This paper now turns to the treatment of temperance in Stoic philosophy.

### **3.2 Stoic Temperance**

The Stoics make several distinct contributions to ethics in general and temperance in particular. First, as a philosophical school, they reinstate the tetrad of cardinal virtues. Second, the Roman Stoics are responsible for the transmission (and translation) of the virtues into Roman language and culture; they attempt to adapt them to the new and quite different culture of Rome, and they help to craft the accompanying vocabulary. Third, via this transmission, they have a significant impact on early Christian thinkers, perhaps the most significant until the Neoplatonism of Augustine and the recovered Aristotelianism of Aquinas. And fourth, they make significant changes to Platonic and Aristotelian notions of temperance, changes which significantly impact Christian ideas of the virtue.

#### **3.2.1 Foundations of Stoic Ethics**

Stoicism arose during the Hellenistic age, when Greek culture was disseminated throughout the surrounding cultures. It was arguably the most influential of the Hellenistic philosophies; yet sketching an overview of Stoic thought is no small

feat.<sup>271</sup> It is difficult to adequately summarize Stoic teachings, as their doctrine underwent numerous and significant changes throughout its hundreds of years as an active philosophical school.<sup>272</sup> Despite their broad range, they possessed numerous shared assumptions, questions, and vocabulary. Generally considered an expansion, rather than a divergence, from the Platonic and Aristotelian schools, they were decidedly Socratic in their origins, to the point of being labeled ‘the Socratics’; influenced by him in both theory and practice, they were particularly taken with his seemingly unshakable self-sufficiency.<sup>273</sup> Often called ‘radical Socratics’ due to their identification of virtue with the presence and exercise of human reason, they were scrupulously intellectual in their discussions and frameworks.<sup>274</sup> Their ethics were also highly rational, with all virtue seen as forms of wisdom. Their most significant contribution to the Socratic legacy, however, was the presentation of its ideas in a systematized fashion.<sup>275</sup>

### 3.2.1.1 Stoic Physics and Cosmology

Ethics holds a central place in Stoic thought, as ‘in its broadest sense ethics informs all the parts of Stoic philosophy.’<sup>276</sup> The Stoics took pride in the coherence of their philosophical system, which viewed humanity and the cosmos as microcosm and

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<sup>271</sup> Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics* (New York: Scribner, 1986), 107-13. Some excellent introductions to Stoic philosophy include J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, vol.1, *Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), ch.1; A.A. Long, *Philosophy*, ch.4; and John M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), ch.4.

<sup>272</sup> Colish (vol.1), 21.

<sup>273</sup> Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties, and Fate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>274</sup> John R. Catan and Giovanni Reale, *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), 11.

<sup>275</sup> Malcolm Schofield, ‘Stoic Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 233-56 (235-9).

<sup>276</sup> Long, *Philosophy*, 119-20.

macrocosm of the same rationality.<sup>277</sup> This coherence extended from the philosophy itself to its application, as a Stoic philosopher ‘is not only one who can think and construct systems, but is chiefly one who can live and die in harmony with his system.’<sup>278</sup> Unlike other classical systems of philosophical thought, of which ethics is only one part, Stoic ethics is foundational in determining the very nature of happiness and the best means of achieving it.<sup>279</sup> Physics and logic exist for the sake of ethics; Stoic philosophy exists to show the Stoic sage how to live (D.L. 7.84).<sup>280</sup> Stoic ethics is intimately tied to Stoic physics, particularly its cosmology. The early Stoics retrieved the materialism of Heraclitus, substituting physics for metaphysics and materiality for transcendence. In their rejection of Platonic and Aristotelian dualism, the Stoics teach a monistic materialism, which is bound together by an all-embracing *logos* (be it known as Zeus or divine reason). The human soul, material and undivided, is related to the universe as microcosm to macrocosm. Thus, the soul and its proper ends of the human soul may be found within the realm of nature.

### **3.2.1.2 *Eudaimonia*, the Human *Telos*, and Appropriate Acts**

For the Stoics, as for Plato and Aristotle, the aim of human life is *eudaimonia*. Zeno describes the human *telos* both as a ‘smoothly flowing life’ (*SVF* I 184) and as a life ‘consistent with reason’ (*SVF* I 202, III 39; D.L. 7.87). This happiness will be found

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<sup>277</sup> Long, *Philosophy*, 108.

<sup>278</sup> Catan and Reale, 12.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>280</sup> All citations from *Stoicorum Veratum Fragmenta* (hereafter *SVF*), Diogenes Laertius (hereafter D.L.), Plutarch *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* (hereafter *OSSC*), and Johannes Stobaeus (hereafter *Ecl.*) are from A. A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). All citations from Arius Didymus (hereafter A.D.) are from William W. Fortenbaugh (ed.), *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Works of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004). All citations from the Tusculan Disputations (hereafter *Disp.*) are from *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4*, trans. Margaret Graver (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).



in living in accord with nature (*SVF* I 179).<sup>281</sup> Zeno received this definition from the Cynics, although he gave it a new and positive content, the largely negative Cynic connotation consisting primarily of ‘the rejection of conventional ways of behaving.’<sup>282</sup> Stobaeus called this ‘living in accordance with one concordant reason’ (2.77, 16-27; *SVF* 3.16). More specifically, it is living with a human nature that reflects its participation in the nature of the ordered cosmos, ‘in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole’, always observing ‘the universal law’. In a phrase reminiscent of Aristotle, Chrysippus equates this universal law with ‘the right reason pervading everything’ (D.L. 7.87).

The existence of a ‘universal law’ naturally leads to the Stoic ‘engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law’ (D.L. 7.87). Yet how does one determine which activities follow this law? As noted above, Stoicism said that one should, first, live according to the larger nature of the universe, and second, we should live according to the particular nature of humanity. As Diogenes Laertius said, ‘And since reason, by way of a more perfect management, has been bestowed on rational beings, to live correctly in accordance with reason comes to be natural for them’ (D.L. VII 85-86). However, the goal is merely to try to obtain things in accordance with nature; it matters not whether they are actually obtained. This is due to the Stoic distinction between *to kathēkon*, a fitting or appropriate action, and *to katorthōma*, a correct or virtuous action (i.e. a *kathēkon* which is in accordance with the human *telos*) (*Ecl.* 2.7.8, 93.15-16). Although both actions are ‘appropriate’ for human beings, it is only *katorthōma* that both springs from and reflects a correct *logos*.

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<sup>281</sup> Opinions vary on whether ‘with nature’ (*tē physei*) was original to Zeno (*Ecl.* 2.75, 11-76, 8) or was added by Cleanthes (D.L. 7.87-9).

<sup>282</sup> R.W. Sharples, *Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics: An Introduction to Hellenistic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 101.

### 3.2.2 Virtue

Happiness is not merely living in accordance with nature; it is also tied to virtue. Zeno states, ‘Living in agreement with nature is the end, which is living in accordance with virtue (*sēn kat aretēn*)’ (SVF I 179, D.L.7.87). This relationship is not artificial or forced, as ‘nature leads up towards virtue’ (D.L. 7.87). It is part of the human design, as human beings ‘naturally seek to be in harmony with nature.’<sup>283</sup> Thus, the universal law is the ‘goal and norm of virtue, just as it is the ruling principle of the cosmos.’<sup>284</sup> Although virtue, which Seneca called ‘perfect reason’ (SVF 3.200a), is not synonymous with happiness, happiness will flow directly from virtue’s possession and practice. In a move away from the classic Hellenic positions, virtue was considered the only true ‘good’, and vice the only true ‘evil.’ All other things – health, wealth, power – are not good but ‘indifferent’, as ‘that which can be used well and badly is not something good’ (D.L. VII 101). Although everything except virtue is technically ‘indifferent’, some indifferents may be ‘preferred’, while others are rejected or neutral. Residing between *kathēkonta* and *katorthōmata* are *mesa kathēkonta* (intermediate appropriate acts), which are aimed towards the preferred indifferents, at least those which are in accord with nature (A.D., 86.12-14). Although Aristotle viewed the truly happy life as requiring some external goods, the Stoics reject Aristotle’s claim that some natural goods are necessary for true happiness, asserting that moral goodness was all one needed for fulfillment. Thus, the indifferents should be regarded with unruffled detachment, as their possession ultimately made no real difference to one’s overall happiness

Although they maintain the classical commitment to eudaimonism in their ethical framework, the Stoics significantly depart from tradition (particularly from the

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<sup>283</sup> Colish (vol.1), 36.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

Peripatetics) with the belief that virtue – as the perfection of reason and therefore as perfect happiness – is sufficient for the attainment of happiness (D.L. 7.127; *Disp.* 5.82). This standard of Stoic thought also brought peace and assurance to its possessors.<sup>285</sup> In this matter the Stoics focus upon one's point of departure, or intentionality. Virtue is entirely a matter of properly aligning oneself internally. A.A. Long notes, 'The Stoics stressed the importance of aiming at rather than achieving a desirable result. Moral judgments and human well-being are related to the agent's inner attitude, his state of mind.'<sup>286</sup> Virtue, therefore, is tied to reason and wisdom. This was, however, a practical wisdom, with *phronēsis* eclipsing *epistēmē*. Zeno considered *phronēsis* constitutive of virtue in general, and related the other cardinal virtues to this as expressions of this *phronēsis* in particular situations. Thus, their ethics also tended towards the practical (the 'practical' part of 'practical wisdom').<sup>287</sup> Moreover, virtue is acquired instantaneously; as the rational mind properly positions itself and accepts the reality of various indifferents, the 'decision' for happiness is sufficient for its achievement. Both happiness and virtue are immediately present.

### 3.2.3 Assent, Passion, and Apatheia

In addition to the distinction between preferred and undesirable indifferents, the Stoics distinguished between things we can affect and things we cannot affect. For the Stoic sage, the only thing entirely under one's control is the ability to conform the will to reason's dictates. Any occurrence, whether welcome or tragic, must be accepted as the will of God (*Disc.* 1.4.111). If all is Fate, and all is God's will, and God's will is to live according to nature, then the essence of Stoic goodness is 'assent' (*sunkatathesis*), the willing acceptance of living as one should. Stoic assent is the

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<sup>285</sup> Catan and Reale, 266.

<sup>286</sup> Long, *Philosophy*, 183.

<sup>287</sup> This was particularly true of the Roman Stoa.

means by which man acknowledges the divine *logos* and its workings. Because assent is affiliated with and chosen by the will, it is something which must be intentionally chosen.<sup>288</sup>

The thing most likely to stand in the way of reason and impede one's ability to assent is emotion or passion (*pathos*). Passion is 'an impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason', or a movement of the soul which is irrational and contrary to reason' (*Ecl.* 2.88, 8-90, *SVF* 3.378). The Stoics considered the passions to be the 'source of any unhappiness' and the result of false opinions about good and evil. A weak *logos* leads to a false opinion and generates an irrational movement of the soul that ultimately becomes a passion. Passions are uniformly bad because they reflect errors in judgment; they are like a disease (*Disp.* 3.10.23). Therefore, the Stoic sage will be *apathēs*, or without passions. However, he will have 'good feelings' (*eupatheia*). The important point to note is that because passions arise from errors in *logos*, they cannot be restrained or limited; they must be uprooted and destroyed. This is Stoic *apatheia*.

Those who believe in Plato's tripartite soul will wonder how this *apatheia* will come about, as the soul wars against itself. But for Chrysippus, there is no conflict in the soul between reason and desire, as he claimed, 'There is no such thing as the appetitive and the spirited elements, for the whole of the human governing-principle is rational' (*SVF* 3.115).' This placed the Stoics in a somewhat untenable position, as they were compelled to deny the existence of innate human irrationality, 'reducing it to errors of reason.'<sup>289</sup> Perhaps most notorious is the example of the Stoic sage who does not grieve after trying and failing to rescue a child from a burning building. The primary difference between the sage and ordinary people is a 'difference in attitude

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<sup>288</sup> Elizabeth Cochran Agnew, 'Virtuous Assent and Christian Faith: Retrieving Stoic Virtue Theory for Christian Ethics', *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30:1 (2010), 117-40 (124).

<sup>289</sup> Catan and Reale, 286.

and motivation’, which may or may not be readily apparent to modern readers.<sup>290</sup> The central point is true *apatheia* cannot be shaken by desires or losses, both of which arise from a flawed *logos*. As the realization of this ethical prescription, the Stoic sage possesses all the virtues and is thus at the highest level of happiness.

### 3.2.4 Stoic Accounts of Temperance

Temperance regained its cardinal status with the Stoics, both due to the reinstatement of the tetrad and the Stoics’ lack of distinction between intellectual and moral virtue.<sup>291</sup> The virtue, its nature and function, and many related topics often found their way into Stoic discussions. Under their watch, temperance found new nuances and regained much of the semantic breadth lost under Aristotle.

#### 3.2.4.1 The Early Stoa

The Stoics’ definitions of temperance evolved with each head of the school. Zeno defined *sōphrosynē* as wisdom (*phronēsis*) in choice (*SVF* I.201, D.L. 7.92). This focus upon choice echoes Aristotle’s description of moral virtue as connected with *prohairesis* (‘choice’ or ‘decision’) both conceptually and etymologically (*Eth.Nic.* 1105a31-32, 1113a1-b2).<sup>292</sup> Zeno also joins Aristotle in naming *akolasia* as the opposite of temperance (*SVF* I.190), despite the differences in their accounts of the virtue itself. However, he renders *akolasia* as ‘profligacy’ (D.L. 7.93), a gloss which gives the term a different emphasis than its rendering as ‘self-indulgence’ in the *Eth.Nic.*<sup>293</sup> Interestingly, Zeno names ‘folly’ (*aphrosynē*) – one Platonic antonym for

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<sup>290</sup> Sharples, 105. Modern criticism of Stoic ethics focuses primarily upon the perceived inhumanity of their position.

<sup>291</sup> North, 215.

<sup>292</sup> North expands upon the Platonic and Aristotelian connections between virtue and moral choice (216n.58).

<sup>293</sup> See III.10-12. Profligacy usually translates *anēthikótita* or *asōtia*.

temperance<sup>294</sup> – as the vice contrasted to *phronēsis*. This is unsurprising in light of the Stoic doctrine of virtue as knowledge; the central virtue, *phronēsis*, would stand in contrast to a mindless foolishness. Zeno’s definition is both revision and evolution; temperance loses its connection to self-control, limit, and *metron* – prominent ideas in Plato and Aristotle – but becomes more closely coupled to the concept of moral choice, which Aristotle assigned to virtue in general.<sup>295</sup> North calls this a ‘genuine innovation’, which echoed ‘earlier ways of looking at the virtue (especially ways attributed to Socrates), but emphasizing an aspect that had never before been so prominent.’<sup>296</sup> This account of temperance will remain foundational through the end of the Old Stoa.<sup>297</sup>

Subsequent work in this period is more adjustment than overhaul. Cleanthes, in his *Physical Treatises*, describes the internal tension which may become ‘strength and might’; when developed, this tension is called self-control (*enkrateia*) when dealing with matters requiring persistence, and called temperance (*sōphrosynē*) when facing matters of choice and avoidance (*OSSC*, 1034C-E). Cleanthes makes more explicit the nature of *phronēsis* as a meta-virtue, removing it from the tetrad of cardinal virtues and adding *enkrateia* in its place (*SVF* I.563). The appearance within the tetrad of two virtues concerned with control and mastery shows the importance of this family of virtues to the attainment of *apatheia*, and thus to the attainment of *eudaimonia*. Ariston follows Zeno when he defines temperance as *phronēsis* in choosing the good and avoiding evil (*SVF* I.374); again, this is its fundamental definition in the Old Stoa. However, Ariston also names temperance as that which

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<sup>294</sup> See *Gorg.* 507a; *Prot.* 332b; *Phil.* 45d; *Laws* 689a, 715e.

<sup>295</sup> North, 216.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>297</sup> This definition of temperance is the only one advanced by Colish (vol.1), for the entirety of the early Stoa (1985a, 44).

controls desire and brings the pursuit of pleasure under the rule of the *hegemonikon* (*SVF* I.375), which echoes its previous Platonic and Aristotelian interpretations.<sup>298</sup>

Chrysippus makes three significant modifications in his treatment of virtue, both generally and regarding temperance. The first is the Socratic identification of virtue with *epistēmē* and *technē*, rather than *phronēsis*. This leads to two definitions of temperance, which emphasize the intellectual and moral dimensions of the virtue respectively. Theoretically, temperance is *epistēmē* in matters of choice and avoidance (*SVF* 3.262); practically, temperance stabilizes the impulses in order not to conflict with the ruling reason (*SVF* 3.280). ‘Temperance,’ says Stobaeus, ‘has as its own principal task to render the impulses stable and to oversee them’ (*Ecl.* 2.7.5b5). The second change is the quasi-Aristotelian description of temperance as a ‘*hexis* in matters of choice and avoidance, which preserves the judgments of reason’ (*SVF* 3.274, 3.275). The first part of this definition echoes Aristotle’s designation of general virtue as *hexis* in matters of choice (*Eth.Nic.* 1106b36); the second recalls Aristotle’s assertion that temperance ‘preserves wisdom’ (*sōzei tēn phronēsin*) (*Eth.Nic.* 114013). His third modification is assigning each virtue a group of secondary characteristics, possibly trying to categorize popular morality within formal Stoic ethics.<sup>299</sup> Those appended to temperance include self-restraint (*enkrateia*), proper arrangement (*eutaxia*), shamefulness (*aidēmosynē*), and orderliness (*kosmiotēs*) (*SVF* 3.264). In this list, Chrysippus ‘subordinates’ to temperance two of the three main Platonic glosses for the virtue – self-control and order. North observes that ‘the persistent alliance of *kosmiotēs* and *sōphrosynē* finds a new expression in a Stoic doctrine recorded by Diogenes Laertius (7.100). The four species of the beautiful are the just, the brave, the orderly (*kosmion*), and the wise.’ This list

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<sup>298</sup> Attributed to Ariston by Galen and Plutarch, respectively. North says these definitions are ‘not contradictory but complementary’ (218).

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

emphasizes Chrysippus' definition of temperance as the stabilization of the *hormae*, as all the secondaries are concerned with regulation and control. Thus, he lays the foundation for the thought of the Middle Stoa, which will make the *hormae* a point of practical ethical engagement.<sup>300</sup> However, the most prominent and enduring feature of temperance for the Old Stoa remains its relationship to choice and avoidance.

#### 3.2.4.2 The Middle Stoa

After Chrysippus, Stoics ethics yields some of its intellectual rigor and strict moral code. The two leaders of the middle Stoa, Panaetius and Posidonius, show an almost Platonic or Aristotelian openness to three things: the presence of an irrational component of the soul, the possibility of growth in the life of virtue, and the necessity of the indifferents in achieving *eudaimonia*, which they saw as necessary correctives to what they perceived as errors in Chrysippus' overly rational psychology.<sup>301</sup> Panaetius' most innovative position is the location of virtue in the impulses (*hormae*) themselves (*Off.* 1.4.11-14), an unimaginable position for the early Stoa.<sup>302</sup> Thus, temperance loses connection with choice and avoidance and becomes more closely associated with pleasure and the impulses. This, in turn, revives the traditional notion of temperance as control of the passions.

Panaetius further defines temperance as the natural desire for decorum, order, and 'due measure' (*Off.* 1.4.11-14). Annas sees this as 'an aesthetic as well as a psychological drive', which aligns itself to temperance through the hegemony of reason.<sup>303</sup> He makes another connection to classical temperance in his emphasis upon virtue arising from the nature appropriate to each individual; we are 'to stick closely

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<sup>300</sup> North, 218-9.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 220. John Rist calls these correctives 'Stoic self-criticism' (*Stoic*, 173 n.3).

<sup>302</sup> All *de Officiis* citations are from *On Obligations*, trans. P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>303</sup> Annas, 45.



to the characteristics peculiar to us, so long as they are not flawed' (*Off.* 1.30.110-11). This observance of the individual contains echoes of both the Aristotelian 'mean relative to us' and the Platonic 'Know Thyself.' While this does not specifically mention temperance, the connection between virtue and self-knowledge has reappeared.

Panaetius here emphasizes the concept of *to prepon* – style or social decorum – whereby the control of the appetites is present, but as an aesthetic rather than moral function.<sup>304</sup> *To prepon* is the external manifestation of the fine, originating in the Peripatetic discussions of rhetoric. Following from individual nature (*Off.* 1.30.110-11), it connotes appropriateness and propriety and indicates a socially mediated type of behavior in civilized society. Its Latin equivalent *decorum* (*Off.* 1.27.93-94) is tied to self-control, temperance, the subjection of the passions, and moderation; as such, it 'gives a polish to life' (*Off.* 1.27.93). The focus upon *phronēsis* in choice is supplanted by a renewed interest in symmetry, harmony, and order; however, this is order as *prepon*, not as *kosmos* as seen in the internal harmony of Plato's *Republic*.

Whereas Panaetius acknowledged the moral possibilities inherent in the impulses and passions, Posidonius, in point of fact, both acknowledges the existence of irrational faculties within the soul and restores the passions to them. Temperance becomes, once again, the virtue of the irrational appetite, submitting it to reason as described by Aristotle and Plato.<sup>305</sup> Thus, in the middle Stoa, choice and avoidance have been replaced by decorum, order, measure, and the restraint of appetite.

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<sup>304</sup> North, 222.

<sup>305</sup> North notes that the word *sōphrosynē* does not appear in the extant Fragments of Posidonius (224 n.80).

### 3.2.4.3 The Roman Stoa

Under the Roman Stoa, temperance undergoes particularly important developments. It continues to be understood as restraint of the appetites, which is not surprisingly given that the Roman Stoa are quite concerned with the practical aspects of virtue. Arius Didymus defines temperance as ‘health of the soul’, which ‘rids us from the excess of emotions’ (124, 5.3).<sup>306</sup> He then connects it, by analogy, to wealth: ‘For wealth takes care of most mistakes (we make), as well as health takes care of bodily disorders and temperance of excessive emotions’ (125, 5.5). Musonius shows a particular affinity for temperance (perhaps due to his high opinion of simplicity) and emphasizes its aspects of frugality and self-control (*enkrateia*).<sup>307</sup> His claims that it is preferable to actually be self-controlled and temperate than to possess correct knowledge about them illustrate his high regard for these nuances of temperance.<sup>308</sup> However, it was Cicero who made the most important and most enduring changes to the virtue of temperance.

### 3.2.5 Cicero – From *Sōphrosynē* to *Temperantia*

This section considers four issues regarding Cicero and temperance: his philosophical position and particular philosophical task; his definitions of the concept of temperance, the cardinal virtue (*sōphrosynē*); his translations of *sōphrosynē* and associated terms; and his legacy in the journey of temperance.

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<sup>306</sup> Herwig Görgemanns, ‘*Oikeiōsis* in Arius Didymus’, in William W. Fortenbaugh (ed.), *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Works of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004) indicates that Arius is endorsing a Peripatetic view of the passions, using the language of excess (*sphodrotēs*) and ‘pointing to *metriopatheia*, not *apatheia*’ (179).

<sup>307</sup> North, 229, n.94.

<sup>308</sup> V, 21, cited in North, 228.

### 3.2.5.1 Cicero's Philosophical Task and Position

Ethics is of primary importance for Cicero, who believes that among the various branches of philosophy, only ethics can both engage the meaning of various truth claims and explore the practical import of these claims.<sup>309</sup> Moreover, Cicero had a 'strong yet elastic commitment' to the Stoic school of philosophy and draws very heavily from Stoicism in his ethical treatises.<sup>310</sup> Cicero, like the other Roman Stoics, defines virtue (*honestum* in the Latin) as living in accord with reasoned nature (*Fin.* 3.3.10-14),<sup>311</sup> and he adheres to the Stoic position that virtue is sufficient for happiness (*Disp.* 3.17.37). He advocates a radical extirpation of the irrational judgments of *pathē*, rejecting utterly the Peripatetic notion of *metriopatheia* (*Disp.* 3.6.13-3.10.21). He also explores the traditional understandings of the cardinal virtues, including temperance.

Yet while Cicero engages Hellenic and Hellenistic philosophies and their central concepts, he struggles throughout to assimilate these virtues with the Roman catalogue of virtuous activity (the *virtus Romana*). His task was not the rote transmission of Greek philosophy; rather, he worked to both evaluate and communicate their core wisdom in a manner that could be integrated into the extant ethos of Rome.<sup>312</sup> Cicero was the first Roman to propound a reasoned defense of philosophy to a community lacking an indigenous tradition of speculative thought; and this task of 'interpretation and reformulation' is perhaps Cicero's chief contribution to the heritage of philosophy.<sup>313</sup> Nowhere is this task as complicated as in his treatment of temperance, as North observes, 'Of all the forms of Greek *aretē*,

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<sup>309</sup> Colish (vol.1), 126-7.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>311</sup> All *de Finibus* citations are from *On Moral Ends*, trans. Raphael Woolf, ed. Julia Annas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>312</sup> Colish (vol.1), 72.

<sup>313</sup> See Colish (vol.1), 72; North, 268; Powell, 24.

*sōphrosynē* proved the most difficult to assimilate to the *virtus Romana*. In its origins – social and political, as well as temperamental – it was entirely foreign to Rome.<sup>314</sup> This paper will now consider Cicero’s attempts to render *sōphrosynē* both comprehensible and palatable to his audience, and the lasting effect of these attempts upon the virtue of temperance. As stated above, these attempts fall into two distinct yet interrelated categories: his *definitions* of the virtue and his Latin *translations* of the Greek *sōphrosynē*. These will now be considered, beginning with the definitions of the virtue.

### 3.2.5.2 Cicero’s Definitions of Temperance

Cicero offers several definitions of temperance throughout his corpus. His early work *de Inventione* reflects the Stoic designation of *pathē* as errors of judgment, calling temperance ‘the form and well-regulated (*moderata*) dominion of reason over lust and other improper affections of the mind’ (*Inv.* 2.54).<sup>315</sup> Its parts are called continence (*continentia*), clemency (*clementia*), and modesty (*modestia*), a list which both echoes Chrysippus and foreshadows Aquinas (albeit indirectly). Temperance and the other cardinal virtues ‘are to be sought for themselves, even if no advantage is to be acquired by them’ (2.54), thus affirming the Stoic valuation of virtue for its own sake. His opening definition is straightforward and largely unsurprising.

Temperance receives a broader treatment in Cicero’s later works, starting with his treatise on the emotions, the *Tusculan Disputations*. Here temperance still includes the regulation of emotion by reason: It ‘allays the cravings and causes them to obey right reason, and maintains the well-considered judgments of the mind’ (*Disp.*

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<sup>314</sup> North maintains that ‘*sōphrosynē* was so intensely Hellenic that in its totality it always remained an exotic in Rome’ (258).

<sup>315</sup> He is, however, slightly Peripatetic in his affirmation of well-regulated dominion instead of extirpation. All *De Inventione* citations are from *De Inventione*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Whitefish MT: Kessinger Publishing LLC, 2004).

4.9.22); it prevents ‘transports of immoderate eagerness’ (*Disp.* 5.14.42). Simply put, it is the ‘governance of all our feelings and agitations’ (*Disp.* 5.14.178) and is thus considered as the health of the mind, ‘when its judgments and opinions are not at variance with one another’ (*Disp.* 4.13.139). To this definition, Cicero adds the restraint of lust (*Disp.* 3.17; 5.14.42), which recalls both its Platonic and Aristotelian glosses.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, temperance acts a center of moral stability, preventing shameful or depraved actions (*Disp.* 3.36) and preserving a ‘decent steadiness (*moderata constantia*) in everything’ (*Disp.* 3.17). Governance of emotions, restraint of lust, avoidance of shame, and preservation of moderation: this is a surprisingly Peripatetic lineup.

In *de Finibus*, temperance is explicitly defined as ‘the control (*moderatio*) of the appetites in obedience to the reason’ (*Fin.* 2.60), thus reinforcing the primary existing meaning. It is also temperance ‘that warns us to be guided by reason in what we desire and avoid’ (*Fin.* 1.47), a move that recalls the primary definition of the Old Stoa. Temperance receives a slightly more positive gloss in this work, as Cicero maintains that temperance is desirable ‘not because it renounces pleasures, but because it procures greater pleasures’ (*Fin.* 1.48). This work is also important because it is Cicero’s first mention of order and harmony in connection with temperance. Temperance ‘bestows peace of mind, and soothes the heart with a tranquilizing sense of harmony’ (*Fin.* 1.47). Moreover, it is connected to the principle of order and moderation, which Cicero calls ‘beauty in the moral sphere of speech and conduct’ (*Fin.* 2.47). These are small but significant references to the positive side of temperance. However, his parting remarks on the subject are more negative and less surprising: temperance is, ‘in a word’, ‘modesty, restraint, and chastity’ (*Fin.* 2.73).

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<sup>316</sup> See *Rep.* IV 430-431; *Eth.Nic.* III.10-12.

*De Officiis* is considered by many to be Cicero's most influential ethical treatise, and it is perhaps his only work that considers temperance to be of primary importance to the Roman public morality.<sup>317</sup> Its treatment of temperance opens with some innovation, connecting the virtue to order and, for the first time for Cicero, to 'due measure' (*Off.* 1.4.14); by these both words and deeds will 'reflect an underlying moderation and self-control' (*Off.* 1.5.15).<sup>318</sup> Although this passage does not specifically name temperance as such, it clearly addresses the cardinal virtues as the sources of 'all that is honourable' (*Off.* 1.5.15). Here Cicero connects temperance with *humanitas*, the particularly human nature, as only humans crave beauty, consistency, and order (*Off.* 1.4.14).

In its next appearance, which also addresses the components of the honourable, temperance receives no official name; but within it 'we discern modesty, temperance (the jewel, so to say, which embellishes life), moderation, total cessation of mental disturbances, and due limit in all things' (*Off.* 1.27.93). Temperance is also connected here with *decorum* ('the fitting'), one of Cicero's favorite philosophical and rhetorical virtues; indeed, it contains 'the very essence of *decorum*' (*Off.* 1.28.100). Temperance still retains the role of conforming appetite to reason, allowing them neither to run ahead nor lag behind, steering clear of rashness and carelessness, and always following a praiseworthy motive (*Off.* 1.28.101). Temperance serves tranquility of soul, strength of character, and self-control; through it we observe due limits (*Off.* 1.29.102). Instead of surrendering to excess, luxury, and greed, temperance leads to thrift, self-control, austerity, and sobriety (*Off.* 1.30.106).

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<sup>317</sup> North considers *de Officiis* to be Cicero's clearest treatment of temperance due to the treatise's distinctive 'Roman color' (279-80). It certainly contributed to future moral discourse, not least from its transmission to early Christianity via Ambrose; see Colish (vol.1) 156-7 and Colish (vol.2), 48-70.

<sup>318</sup> Here the translator renders *temperantia* as 'self-control', whereas in 1.27.93 he renders it as 'temperance.'

Thus, the primarily negative connotations attributed by Cicero to temperance include the control of affections and appetites by reason, the restraint of lust, the avoidance of shameful actions, and a general modesty, chastity, and self-control. The primarily positive connotations include the preservation of internal steadiness, the procurement of the ‘greater’ pleasures, order and beauty in one’s speech and conduct, and internal peace and harmony. However, the actual definitions given by Cicero are only one part of the equation; what will now be considered are the various Latin translations of *sōphrosynē* which Cicero employs, for these choices have a significant impact on the journey of this virtue.

### 3.2.5.3 Cicero’s Translations of *Sōphrosynē* and Associated Terms

The Roman Stoa, among others, undertook a particular linguistic task when they brought Greek philosophy to Rome, as the Greek language possessed a substantial number of technical philosophical terms with no exact Latin equivalents; and they struggled to find points of connection that were philosophically sound. Cicero was not starting from scratch, as numerous and variable translations were present in popular usage before systematic philosophical exchange began.<sup>319</sup> He employs various terms, valuable yet incomplete, in his translations of *sōphrosynē*. Many of these emphasize the Roman sentiment towards propriety and reserve; some examples include *pudicitia* (‘chastity’), *sobrius* (‘sobriety’), *castus/castitas* (‘chastity, chaste’), and *verecundia* (‘shamefulness, modesty, reserve’).<sup>320</sup> Another subordinate, *continentia* (‘self-control’), may be associated more directly with classical Greek

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<sup>319</sup> North, 261. She later remarks that because of these difficulties, Cicero often uses the Greek original without translation or lists the cardinal virtues as a group, ‘so that there can be no doubt about the Greek terms he is translating (269 n.31).’

<sup>320</sup> For instances of *pudicitia*, see *Fin* 2.22.73; *Leg.* 1.19.50; for *sobrius*, see *Off.* 1.30.106); for *castus*, see *Pro Balbo* 9; for *verecundia*, see *Leg.* 1.19.50; *Off.* 1.93. Of these, *pudicitia* ‘has the deepest roots in the Roman ethical vocabulary’ (North, 263).

morality, as it generally translates *enkrateia*.<sup>321</sup> On one occasion it is subordinated to *temperantia*, as that 'by which cupidity is kept down under the superior influence of wisdom' (*Inv.* 2.54). Although *temperantia* and *continentia* generally translate *sōphrosynē* and *enkrateia*, respectively, the two terms were often considered synonymous.<sup>322</sup> This conflation proves important in later generations; Augustine, among others, makes the terms almost interchangeable.<sup>323</sup>

While these terms connect *sōphrosynē* directly to the *virtus Romana*, Cicero nevertheless employs others with greater frequency, perhaps because they more clearly reflect the full intent of the original. Although there are no exact translations of *sōphrosynē*, two primary word families emerge: *temperare* and *modus*.<sup>324</sup> Perhaps his most common choice, *temperare* has several semantic domains:<sup>325</sup>

- to observe proper measure, be moderate, restrain oneself
- to forbear, abstain, refrain
- to mingle in due proportion, combine suitably, compound properly
- to qualify, to temper (e.g. a tempered blade)
- to rule, regulate, govern, manage, arrange, order

Cicero employs many of these connotations in his renderings of *sōphrosynē*. While some contain material commonly associated with the Greek virtue, the concept of 'mixing' imbues the virtue with fresh meaning.<sup>326</sup> This meaning is represented by the image of pouring water into wine, intensifying the connotation of moderation or restraint. This image of dilution is unfortunate, as it results in the loss of a dynamic

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<sup>321</sup> See *Leg.* 1.19.50; *Off.* 1.93, *Off.* 1.30.106.

<sup>322</sup> North, 265.

<sup>323</sup> See 4.2.4 below.

<sup>324</sup> For variations on *temperare*, see *Inv.* 2.54; *Disp.* 3.8, 3.16, 3.36; *Leg.* 1.19.50; *Fin* 2.60, 2.73, 4.19; *Off.* 1.5.15; 1.93.

<sup>325</sup> All Latin translations are from *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, rev. J.R.V. Marchant and Joseph F. Charles [1854] (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1955).

<sup>326</sup> North, 262.



aspect of the virtue's function. Within this etymological family, *temperantia* is the most common, and is in fact Cicero's first translation of *sōphrosynē* (*Inv.* 2.54).<sup>327</sup>

The other primary word family for *sōphrosynē* in Cicero's work is *modus* ('limit').<sup>328</sup> Within this family, Cicero primarily uses *modestia* ('modesty') and *moderatio* ('moderation'). Cicero defines *modestia* as 'that feeling by which honourable shame (*pudor honesti*) acquires a valuable and lasting authority' (*Inv.* 2.54); its connotations include unassuming conduct, modesty, discretion, shamefulness, sense of honor, and correctness of conduct. Cicero uses *moderatio* more commonly as a direct translation of *sōphrosynē*, and at times he connects it directly to virtue itself (*Inv.* 2.53). Its associations include guidance, government, regulation, and self-control; along with *temperantia*, it conveyed the essence of Latin temperance, the restraint and governance of passion, appetite, and desire. Furthermore, its connection to *modestia* emphasizes its restrictive undertones. In reality, both *temperare* and *modus*, as utilized by Cicero, are typified by their negative facets.

The most notable characteristic of the group as a whole is their emphasis on the negative aspects of *sōphrosynē*, the repression of appetites and desires. Either in etymology (*sobrius*, *castus*) or in meaning (*temperans*, *moderans*, *continens*), these terms imply restriction or denial. It was much easier to grasp the negative than the positive significance of *sōphrosynē*, just as it was easier to assimilate the concept in a fragmentary way than to embrace its totality.<sup>329</sup>

However, both terms can be given a more positive meaning. *Modus* possesses a semantic richness not adequately conveyed by Cicero's use of *modestia* and *moderatio*:

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<sup>327</sup> North notes that this translation is made 'without comment on the problems involved, thereby strongly suggesting that the equivalence of the two words had already been established in the schools of rhetoric' (268).

<sup>328</sup> For variations on *modus*, see *Inv.* 2.53, 54; *Leg.* 1.19.50; *Disp.* 3.16, 36; 5.34; *Fin.* 2.60, 4.19; *Off.* 1.29.102.

<sup>329</sup> North, 265.

- measure, extent, quantity
- proper measure, due measure
- measure, rhythm, melody, harmony,
- way, manner, mode, method

This interpretation gains support when read alongside the associated terms *ordo* ('order') and *modus* ('measured limit') in Cicero's later works (cf. *Off.* 1.5.15). These associations become even more interesting when one considers the domain of *tempus* ('time'), another cognate of *temperare*. Symbolized by an image of an hourglass, it connotes:

- portion of time, period, season, interval
- occasion, opportunity, leisure
- appointed time, fit season, right occasion, proper period, opportunity

These words give a sense of proportion, cooperation, and timing. This sense is strengthened by adding some lesser-known glosses of *temperantia*: 'combine suitably, compound properly, temper as a blade.' Taken together, they suggest a mode or manner of living which incorporates all things in due course, a collaboration of disparate parts based in rhythm and revealed in harmony. In his study of world harmony, Leo Spitzer offers a different and quite compelling read of *temperare* as something wherein the Greek ideals of order and measure imbue all of life, from the exalted to the mundane.<sup>330</sup> 'Accordingly,' he continues, '*temperare* would mean an intervention at the right time and in the right measure, by a wise (*sōphron*) "moderator" who adjusts, adapts, mixes, alternatively softens or hardens.'<sup>331</sup> This is a much richer understanding of the movements of temperance. These nuances, if recovered, could enrich the substance of temperance and open new avenues for an understanding of the virtue.

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<sup>330</sup> Leo Spitzer, 'Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony', *Traditio* III (1945), 320.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 3.2.5.4 Cicero's Legacy

Cicero engages a task which is triply difficult: examining an ethical ideal quite foreign to Rome, attempting to reconcile it to a virtue of his own, and constrained in his choices of the representative terms. Seen this way, it is unsurprising that Cicero should admit, decades after first using *temperantia* in *De Inventione*, that there still existed no precise translation of *sōphrosynē*.<sup>332</sup> Yet Cicero is largely successful in his task; North correctly identifies calls him as ‘the key figure in the naturalization of *sōphrosynē*.’<sup>333</sup> In all fairness, Cicero makes solid choices in utilizing *temperantia* and *moderatio*; they convey central aspects of the character and intent of *sōphrosynē*. However, had he chosen to emphasize the aspects of *temperare* and *modus* that connote measure, proportion, and harmony, he could have enlarged and dynamized the scope and import of the virtue as it was received by the Church Fathers.<sup>334</sup>

#### 3.2.6 Particularities of Stoic Temperance

The Stoic treatment of temperance both maintained and diverged from earlier accounts; many of the previous connections are present, but none are indiscriminately adopted. One vital contribution is the reintroduction of the tetrad of cardinal virtues, through which temperance would always retain something of its classical identity and meaning.<sup>335</sup> With the early Stoa, temperance governs the realm of choice and avoidance, calling to mind the knowledge of good and evil in the *Charmides*. The Stoics return to the concept of virtue as knowledge, although the type of knowledge

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<sup>332</sup> In 45 BCE (approximately 45 years after *De Inventione*), Cicero says the ‘fourth virtue’ ‘is variously described as “self-controlled” or “moderate” or “temperate” or “consistent and self-contained”’ (*Disp.* 4.36).

<sup>333</sup> ‘No part of his intellectual achievement was more enduring than his creation of a philosophical vocabulary for Rome, and probably no element in that vocabulary presented greater difficulties than the translation of the word *sōphrosynē*’ (North, 268).

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

changed between thinkers; the Socratic *epistēmē* is eschewed by Zeno in favor of *phronēsis* (although Chrysippus does return to *epistēmē*). Also, Panaetius' emphasis upon *natura propria nostra* echoes both the Delphic admonition to self-knowledge the nature of the Aristotelian mean as relative to the agent.

One clear continuation within the tradition is the aspect of self-control, which is elevated to a new level in Stoic ethics. *Enkrateia* both appears as a virtue subordinate to temperance and is elevated to the canon of the cardinal virtues.<sup>336</sup> And with Cicero and the Latinization of the concept, *temperantia* and *continentia* (the usual translation of *enkrateia*) become, at times, virtually interchangeable, a startling alteration from the Aristotelian distinction of the two concepts. While the Stoics do not find merit in self-control *qua* self-control, their insistence upon the complete suppression of the passions awards it an increased importance. Moreover, under their doctrines of instantaneous virtue and total *apatheia*, there is no continuum between temperance, continence, incontinence, and intemperance, as there is for Aristotle. Regarding *apatheia*, a related point is the role of temperance in control of the appetites, with its arena of control expanded to include all passions and appetites. The Stoics held varying attitudes towards appetites and desires, from moderation to full suppression. But whatever the particular view, passion must always be controlled by *sōphrosynē*.

Other areas display significant divergence from the classical history, one of the most significant being the shift from *metriopatheia* to *apatheia*. The early and middle Stoa allow no equivocating; *apatheia* is required for virtue, and thus for happiness. This is a significant departure from the Aristotelian position of *metriopatheia*, and one

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<sup>336</sup> Annas notes that the Stoics 'define *enkrateia* as a subdivision of the virtue of *sōphrosynē* (Arius 60.21, 61.11-12) and so do not explicitly set it up against virtue as a whole. But they recognize, and try to account for, the distinction as a matter of common sense; see Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 445 b-d, 446 c' (53 n.13).

not always maintained by Cicero; he claims that ‘if someone should be found who sets some value upon sensual gratification, he must keep it strictly within the limits of moderate (*modum*) indulgence’ (*Off.* 1.30.106). However, the spirit, if not the form, of the radical nature of *apatheia* will be passed on to the patristic writers, informing their views on sexual pleasure.

Interestingly, and problematically, the relationship between temperance and order is far from uniform. The early Stoics perceive no direct connection between the two ideas, as their cosmic order arises from something larger than the *kosmos* associated with temperance.<sup>337</sup> Moreover, both *to prepon* and its Latin rendering *decorum* have an aesthetic factor tied to fulfilling the expectations of others, which is a vastly different type of order than the harmonious order of *kosmos* or the early Stoic cosmological emphasis on life according to nature. In an ironic note, Aristotle indicates that *to prepon* lends itself to credibility, if not to truthfulness (*Rhet.* III.7.4). Aesthetics now matter more than more ‘traditional’ morality, with Cicero’s focus upon *approbatio* and the ‘outward aspects of *sōphrosynē*’ (*Off.* 1.28.98). ‘Order’ is now determined, not by conformance to cosmic or religious forms, but rather by the social expectations arising from ‘civil’ society. Therefore, any appeals to morality arising from something metaphysical are subsumed within sociological guidelines. Furthermore, there need not be any continuity between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ person; one may be conflicted internally, as long as the external self confirms to *decorum*. This is not a positive development for the moral agent, as it (as Aristotle noted) may sacrifice truthfulness for credibility.

Finally, temperance survived its rather tumultuous journey into the Latin language and culture. Cicero’s depiction and transmission of the virtue heretofore

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<sup>337</sup> North, 215.

known as *sōphrosynē* resulted in an entirely new set of terms – *temperantia*, *moderatio*, *continentia*, *abstinentia*, *castitas* – which deeply took root in moral discourse, as they are largely the same terms – temperance, moderation, continence, abstinence, chastity – found in contemporary English usage.

### 3.2.7 Conclusions on Stoic Temperance

Temperance is invaluable in realizing the Stoic *telos* of living according to perfect reason, untouched by the errors of the passions; it is the virtue ‘most immediately associated with achieving the *summum bonum*.’<sup>338</sup> In Rome, it served the function of restraining the avaricious desires which were so offensive to the *decorum* expected of the Roman citizen. As temperance left Athens and entered Rome, as *sōphrosynē* became *temperantia*, it acquired new meanings which impact conversations on temperance to the present day. Thus, the virtue inherited by the early Christian thinkers was significantly altered. *Temperantia*, and the Stoicism which bred it, would have a decided impact on the Church Fathers, alongside Neoplatonism and the particular moral concerns of the emerging Christian religion.

### 3.3 Conclusions on Classical Temperance

In summary, the Platonic account of temperance underwent changes in both sphere of influence and internal content as it was handled by Aristotle and the Stoics. Its central action is to constrain the appetites shared with other animals, both in their natural and peculiar manifestations. Its presence is indicated by the presence of appropriate pleasure in the satisfaction of appetites, and by the absence of pain at the absence of their satisfaction. Through these actions, it preserves the practical wisdom necessary

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<sup>338</sup> North, 215.

for the realization of virtue, a role particular to this virtue. Temperance is also accurately and helpfully distinguished from continence by the presence or absence of harmony between desire and decision. Therefore, while the explicit gloss of temperance as harmony does not appear in the same form as appears with Platonic temperance, its presence is seen both in the parallels between *Eth.Nic.* III.12 and *Rep.* IV, and also in the distinction between temperance and continence. Another of Aristotle's significant contributions is radically circumscribing its sphere of action, as part of his effort to distinguish each virtue from the others. While temperance in many ways does lose status under Aristotle, it simultaneously (and paradoxically) occupies an especially high position as the underpinning of the doctrine of the mean. However, this connection is legitimately problematic, as temperance becomes unhelpfully associated with moderation and medial responses. Hints do remain of its broader significance in Aristotle's treatment of the 'unnamed virtue' connected to *megalopsychia*. Most notable among these is the possibility of temperance signaling some sort of humility in its possessor, as indicated by the presence of a proper self-knowledge of one's social location and its attendant honors, however moderate.

Temperance regains much of its broader import under the Stoics, particularly the early Stoa, as the particular manifestation of *phronēsis* in the arena of choice, and also via the reestablishment of the tetrad of cardinal virtues. Temperance is the 'health of the soul' and is wisdom in matters of choice. The addition of *enkrateia* to the tetrad after the extraction and elevation of *phronēsis* underscores the importance of the regulatory function of these virtues to the Stoic moral life. While Stoic ethics is rooted in a materialistic cosmology, it is not until the Middle Stoa, via Panaetius, that temperance regains its association with order, although as *decorum* instead of *kosmos*. However, temperance undergoes its most important Hellenistic change in the Latin

translations for *sōphrosynē* utilized and popularized by Cicero, with *temperantia* the most common and certainly the most lasting. I have argued that this development is generally unhelpful, as the core concept of *temperantia* transmitted (as opposed to possessed) is the idea of mixing, with an emphasis upon dilution; note the familiar image of diluting wine with water. Had the dominant glosses involved time or a more dynamic image of ‘mixing’ (as opposed to ‘dilution’), the concept of *temperantia* bequeathed to the following philosophical and theological traditions might have possessed a more bracing content, contributing more than mere images of weakening (such as the weakening of wine by water). Similarly, had *modus* been more often employed as ‘modulation’ and ‘measure’, rather than as ‘modesty’ and ‘moderation’, the unhelpful connotation of a bland mediocrity might have been avoided. This usage, combined with the doctrine of moderation arising from the doctrine of the mean, establishes a legacy of middling mediocrity which will plague the virtue throughout its subsequent history.

Temperance, at the conclusion of the classical period, is a cardinal virtue primarily identified with control of the appetites and a general moderation. It now must find its footing within an entirely different worldview, that of early Christianity.



## Chapter Four

### **The Intersection of Traditions: Augustinian and Thomistic Temperance**

The previous two chapters explored the virtue of temperance in the thought of the three main schools of classical thought: Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. These schools of philosophy remained prominent conversation partners in Rome and the ancient Near East, with Cicero, Seneca, Philo, Plotinus, Porphyry, Varro and others continuing the transmission of the ethics of *eudaimonia* and virtue. This study resumes after a three hundred year hiatus, and a new partner has entered the conversation: the Christian religion. Consequently, the next two chapters examine the journey of temperance through historical Christian moral theology, first in the Patristic and mediaeval periods, and then after the pivotal event of the Reformation. The Reformation not only divided the Church into Protestant and Catholic; it also decisively changed the way Christian moral theology appropriated the virtue tradition. Chapter four engages Augustine and Aquinas, while chapter five examines the thought of John Calvin and John Wesley.

#### **4.1 Early Christian Moral Reflection**

As Christianity entered the dialogues of the late classical world, particularly the Latin West, it found itself engaging the same issues and topics as its ‘pagan’ neighbors. Christianity was in constant conversation, either directly or indirectly, with its classical heritage. Yet the arrival of Christianity brought a new conversation partner to moral philosophy, namely the canon of scripture with its particular (and particularistic) ethos of Jesus and the Old and New Testaments. The intersection of

these new elements with classical moral philosophy set the stage for the moral theology of Augustine and Aquinas.

From the beginning, Christianity contained its own form of moral thinking, complete with new vocabulary, new paradigms, and a new *telos*. It prioritized a new set of norms, such as faith, righteousness, discipleship, and love.<sup>339</sup> The humility of the kenotic Christ was in stark contrast to the honor of Aristotle's *megalopsychos*. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance were supplanted by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13.13). Yet the Christian Church was also birthed into a world suffused with the Hellenistic culture, resulting in a complicated relationship between the two groups. On the one hand, the early apologists and patristic authors freely utilized the language of the philosophies of the day, especially Stoicism and Epicureanism. Moreover, many of them were still impressed with the classical educations they had received and were comfortable working within the classical categories.

However, the first centuries of Christianity also saw a multi-fronted attempt to distinguish itself from its pagan neighbors, and temperance becomes a key player in this endeavor. The patristics particularly appreciated the connection between *temperantia*, purity, virginity, and sexual abstinence, seeking to appropriate temperance as a distinctively Christian virtue.<sup>340</sup> Thus begins the association of temperance with its more ascetical characteristics, specifically chastity.<sup>341</sup> Augustine may certainly be located within this moral trend, applauding (though not always embracing) the 'ascetic preference' for the practice and doctrines of continence and

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<sup>339</sup> Eric F. Osborn, *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 15-37.

<sup>340</sup> North, 312. For a fuller discussion of temperance in patristic literature, see North, 312-79.

<sup>341</sup> Pieper notes the 'stubborn and really quite fanatical preference given to *temperantia*, especially to chastity, which runs through the whole history of Christian doctrine as a more or less hidden undercurrent or countercurrent' (167).

the difference between the ‘lower and higher morality’ of the church in that day.<sup>342</sup>

Thus, both his philosophy and his lifestyle suggest a fruitful discussion of the Augustinian treatments of continence and temperance.

## **4.2 Augustinian Temperance and Continence**

Although Augustine is not primarily known for his attention to the cardinal virtues and *eudaimonism*, he did in fact engage them in a somewhat systematic and continuous manner. And within the tetrad of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, none received more attention, nor established so deep a connection with the man himself, as the virtues of temperance and continence. His early works *On the Happy Life*, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* and *On Free Will*, his classic *Confessions*, and his later works *On Continence* and *City of God* show the depth and breadth of his treatment of the concept. Moreover, they demonstrate how temperance and continence were deeply foundational virtues within Augustine’s moral thought, participating in his own conversion and affecting numerous aspects of Christian conversion and sanctification. While they retain their importance in his other late works, his conceptual shifts result in their being presented in less classically philosophical ways.

### **4.2.1 Philosophical and Theological Location**

Discussing Augustine’s ethics is problematic, as he never produced a formal systematization of his ethical thought.<sup>343</sup> For Augustine, ethics is a central element in

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<sup>342</sup> Philip Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3 [1890] (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2014), *iii*.

<sup>343</sup> George J. Lavere, ‘Virtue’, in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 871-4 (871).

all his theological enterprise, incorporated throughout his treatises and reflections.<sup>344</sup> This would later be true of many Christian moral theologians, with the exception of Aquinas. Although not highly systematized, Augustine's thought is nonetheless quite innovative, managing to incorporate various moral sources, both Greek and Roman, in a cohesive and innovative manner which both reflected their influence and moved beyond it, giving voice to ideas which had been circulating, in nebulous form, through the minds of his contemporaries.<sup>345</sup>

#### 4.2.1.1 Location Within the Classical Tradition

Like other young men of his class and station, Augustine received an education rich in the philosophies of the day. His earliest influences included Cicero and Varro, the Latin curators of the Stoic response to Aristotle. The earliest and most significant was reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, which he admired on both stylistic and substantive grounds.<sup>346</sup> Through it, Augustine was stirred 'to love wisdom itself, whatever it might be, and to search for it, pursue it, hold it, and embrace it firmly' (*sol.* 1.10.17).<sup>347</sup> Stoicism and Neoplatonism are both present in his writings, although the respective importance and the interactions between the two schools of thought can be viewed in various ways. Two points are generally agreed upon. First, Stoicism provided Augustine with a foundation and with categories for a lifetime of ethical contemplation; from it he obtained an interest in happiness and the end of man, resulting in a lifelong eudaimonism.<sup>348</sup> He also incorporated the Stoic ideals of virtue

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<sup>344</sup> William S. Babcock, 'Introduction', in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 5-10 (6).

<sup>345</sup> Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, rev. ed. (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000), 146.

<sup>346</sup> Henry Chadwick, in his *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) calls Cicero Augustine's most important initial influence (10).

<sup>347</sup> All citations of Augustine, unless otherwise noted, are from Philip Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol.3 [1890] (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

<sup>348</sup> See O'Donovan, 'Usus'.

and the assuredness of true happiness. Second, through the writings of Plotinus and Porphyry (via the sermons of Ambrose), he was introduced to Neoplatonism; here Augustine discovered the idea of an ascent to the transcendent Good, which he viewed as the metaphysical foundation of the Stoic interrelationship of self-sufficiency, virtue, and happiness as found in wisdom.<sup>349</sup> These two ingredients – Stoic virtue and Neoplatonic ascent to the Good – are the earliest and most classical components of Augustine’s ethical thought.

#### **4.2.1.2 Location within the Christian Tradition**

Augustine comes to the Christian faith by a circuitous route. Raised by a Christian mother, he received a characteristically classical education which ignited in him the study of philosophy, although he remained a participant of the Catholic Church. His commitment to wisdom and the prevalent image of Christ as ‘the Wisdom of God’ (s. 279, 7) led him to peruse the Bible, which he found both aesthetically unappealing and encumbered with gory narrative. He was soon drawn to Manichaeism, which combined his favorite elements of philosophical rigor with the ‘name of Christ’; nine years later, his growing disillusionment with Manichaeism led him into a brief identification with Skepticism, then to Neoplatonism. However, the critical connection was his growing relationship with Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, who was both a Catholic and able to intellectually engage the younger Augustine. Ambrose’s willingness to bring Neoplatonism and Scripture into conversation had a lasting impact on the young theologian.

These factors, plus pressure from Monica, his mother and a devout Catholic, acted in concert to effect Augustine’s radical conversion to Catholic Christianity in

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<sup>349</sup> Wetzel, *Limits*, 11. R.A. Markus, ed., *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City NY: Anchor Books, 1972) says Augustine made ‘an almost wholesale adoption of Platonic notions, especially in the sphere of ethics’ (380). See also Burnaby, 25.

386 (which for him and others was strongly shaped by Neoplatonism and classical philosophy). Augustine was drawn to the contemplative, monastic possibilities of the life of faith, the desire ‘to be at leisure and see that you are God’ (*conf.* 9.2.4). His exposure to the informal monastic communities in Rome led him to establish a lay community: the *Servi Dei*, or ‘Servants of God’, existing within an informal relationship with the Catholic Church. Here he resided happily for over two years until being forcibly conscripted as bishop of Hippo, a post he occupied until his death.

#### **4.2.1.3 Style of Writing**

Accordingly, for all of Augustine’s philosophical abilities, his written works are often formulated as a response to issues that are primarily ecclesiological or doctrinal. His language and style are therefore somewhat malleable, oriented to the needs of the homiletic and educational tasks at hand. While not a systematic theologian in the mode of Aquinas, Augustine did possess a coherent and integrated architectonic, which may be seen most fully in his comprehensive *City of God*.<sup>350</sup> However, he employed this architectonic as the situation and topic demanded, more closely resembling a ‘call and response’ model than any sort of philosophical prearrangement. Furthermore, both the architectonic and its implementation developed and matured over the course of his career.<sup>351</sup> Thus, his fluidity of thought and flexibility of emphasis complicate both Augustine’s patterns of ethical thought and his ‘position’ on particular ethical issues.

With classical philosophy taking a stronger role in Augustine’s early works than in the later works, it bears asking whether there is sufficient continuity within his

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<sup>350</sup> Frederick Carney, ‘The Structure of Augustine’s Ethic’, in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 11-38 (23).

<sup>351</sup> Babcock sums it up as follows: ‘In the field of Augustine’s ethics, not only are the boundaries ill-defined, but the contours shift and the landmarks change’ (‘Introduction’, 6).

thought to make examination of his early works worthwhile. Some scholars argue for a continuity of thought between the ‘young’ and ‘old’ Augustine; others describe Augustine’s thought in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* and *On Free Will* as ‘a set course’ and ‘first principles’ of his life’s work.<sup>352</sup> This is not to say that his thought underwent no development or maturation; his later work shows a clearer distinction from Hellenistic thought and less dependence upon intellectual elitism.<sup>353</sup> However, a careful reading should identify certain themes throughout his corpus.

#### 4.2.2 Foundations of Augustinian Ethics

Augustine bases his ethical thought upon two sets of premises, one philosophical and one theological. Philosophically, he operates on two basic assumptions. First, he holds, in various forms, the Stoic belief that virtue is necessary to realize true happiness, which should not be subject to the vagaries of fortune. Second, he sees the Christian journey as something akin to the Neoplatonic ascent of the soul to a transcendent Good. Theologically, he amends these classical doctrines in the following manner. First, God is the source of the ordered world and is the proper subject of awe and worship. Second, humanity falls short of the Creator’s intentions and stands in need of redemption; this is a direct rejection of the Stoic ideal of virtuous self-sufficiency. Third, although God Himself transcends both time and history, He has acted within both, particularly and conclusively in the person of Jesus and through the ongoing work of the Spirit. It is upon these foundations that Augustine builds his moral thought, which he expands in the following ways.

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<sup>352</sup> Carol Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Babcock, ‘Introduction,’ and Chadwick, 29, respectively.

<sup>353</sup> Bonnie Kent, ‘Augustine’s Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleanore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 205-33 (209).

#### 4.2.2.1 Teleological Eudaimonism

Like the classical philosophers, Augustine begins his ethical speculations in the framework of teleological eudaimonism, asking about happiness and the proper end for humans to pursue. This end Augustine calls the *summum bonum*, our ‘chief good.’ As he prepares to consider the proper ends of humanity, Augustine asks the question: ‘What is man? Is he both of these, body and soul? Or is he the body only, or the soul only?’ (*mor.* 4.6). Augustine elects not to answer the question outright, but he does take a stand on where our chief good is located: ‘For whether the name man belongs to both, or only to the soul, what is the chief good either of both soul and body, or of the soul only, that is man’s chief good’ (*mor.* 4.6). For Augustine, happiness occurs ‘when that which is man’s chief good is both loved and possessed’ (*mor.* 3.4). He stipulates two conditions for this chief good, that it is ‘superior to man’ and ‘can be possessed by the man who loves it’ (*mor.* 3.5). Furthermore, and in agreement with the Stoics, it must be something which cannot be lost against the will (*mor.* 3.5). And ultimately, what cannot be lost against the will can only come from God, as ‘God alone remains’ (*mor.* 6.10). Stated more clearly, God is the perfection of all our good things and our perfect good (*mor.* 8.13, 11.18).

Central to Augustine’s eudaimonism is the relationship between what is to be enjoyed and valued for its own sake (*frui*) and what is merely to be utilized to achieve this end (*uti*); this echoes Cicero’s analysis of the *honestum* and the *utile* in *De Officiis*. Only God, and the enjoyment of him, should be pursued for its own sake; all other goods should be utilized in service of this one proper end. This is not merely a reflection of the ‘early,’ Platonic Augustine; many years later, he maintains, ‘If I were to ask you why you became Christians, every man will answer truly, “For the sake of happiness”’ (*s.* 150.4). For Augustine, ‘following after God is the desire of



happiness,’ and that ‘to reach God is happiness itself.’ He continues, ‘We follow after God by loving Him’ (*mor.* 11.18). Later in the work, he states that to ‘have in view to reach eternal life,’ one must love God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind (*mor.* 25.47). And what is the function of this happiness, our *summum bonum*? It is that by which the soul is perfected, ‘in following which the soul comes to the perfection of good of which it is capable in its own kind’ (*mor.* 5.7). This perfection Augustine later calls sanctification (*mor.* 13.22). Thus, for Augustine, to seek happiness is, simultaneously: to pursue one’s chief good, to follow after God, to love God, to seek eternal life, and to be sanctified. Augustine was to retain his eudaimonistic orientation throughout his career.<sup>354</sup>

#### 4.2.2.2 God as Divine Order

Order (*ordo*) is one of the cornerstones of Augustine’s theology.<sup>355</sup> In his early works, Augustine locates the basis of divine order in Reason: ‘Man finds a happy and peaceful life when all his impulses agree with reason and truth’ (*ord.* 1.9.27). Yet order, for Augustine, is always divine in its origins; in the *Confessions* he names God as that ‘from whom is every mode, every species, every order; from whom are measure, number, weight; from whom is everything which has an existence in nature, of whatever kind it be (*conf.* 5.11).

Augustine identifies order with *measure* and *mode*, a significant classical echo; indeed, he consistently connects measure (*modus*), form (*species*), and order

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<sup>354</sup> Carol Harrison, *Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79. See also Oliver O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 168 n.20.

<sup>355</sup> One helpful source on Augustine’s use of *ordo* is Joseph Torchia, ‘The Significance of *Ordo* in St. Augustine’s Moral Theory’, in *Collectanea Augustiniana III* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1991), 321-35.

(*ordo*).<sup>356</sup> This connection is not limited to his early, ‘philosophical’ works, but extends throughout his corpus. In *On the Nature of the Good*, he calls these three things ‘universal goods’ that exist in ‘all things made by God’ (*nat. b.* 3); if they were consistently observed, ‘there would be no evil’ (*nat. b.* 37). And even the heavenly city sees order as the foundation from which all creation proceeds.

His beginning, then, is the handiwork of God; for there is no nature, even among the least, and lowest, and last of the beasts, which was not the work of Him from whom has proceeded all measure, all form, all order, without which nothing can be planned or conceived. (*ciu.* 11.15)<sup>357</sup>

While order is concerned with hierarchy and proper regulation, Augustine makes a further – and positive – connection between order and harmony (*concordia*). In the *City of God*, Augustine locates the ‘peace of the body’ in ‘the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts’ (*ciu.* 19.13). He then locates the peace of both the rational and irrational souls in a state of harmony, ‘the harmony of knowledge and action’ and ‘the harmonious repose of the appetites’, respectively (*ciu.* 19.13). Peacefulness, or blessedness (*beatitudo*), occurs in every sphere – bodily, familial, political, and spiritual – when harmonious order is present: ‘The peace of all things is the tranquility of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place’ (*ciu.* 19.13). This ‘allotment of place’ sounds quite Platonic, echoing both the definition of temperance in the *Republic* and the definition of justice in *Rep.* IV.<sup>358</sup> However, to both recognize and acknowledge humanity’s place in the divine order requires the third particularity of Augustinian moral theology, humility.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch (New York: Random House, 1960), 144.

<sup>357</sup> See also *ciu.* 11.23, 12.25.

<sup>358</sup> See 2.5.2 above.

<sup>359</sup> For discussions of humility in Augustine, see David Jonathan Bobb, ‘Competing Crowns: An Augustinian Inquiry into Humility, Magnanimity, and Political Pride’ (PhD. dissertation, Boston College, 2006) and Deborah Wallace Ruddy, ‘A Christological Approach to Virtue: Augustine and Humility’ (PhD. dissertation, Boston College, 2001).

#### 4.2.2.3 The Centrality of Humility

Augustinian humility has a christological foundation: ‘This way of humility comes from another source; it comes from Christ... what else did he teach but humility?’ (*en. Ps.* 31.2.18).<sup>360</sup> Christ is the standard (*norma*) of our humility, and we are to learn from him (*s.* 68.11). Augustine’s praise of humility is an important distinction, as his primary criticism of pagan morality was its self-reliance; indeed, the two cities of *The City of God* were contrasted by pride and humility.<sup>361</sup> The Stoic emphasis upon self-achievement was at stark odds with Augustine’s belief in human depravity: ‘Everywhere are to be found excellent precepts concerning morals and discipline, but this humility is not to be found’ (*en. Ps.* 31.2.18). Augustine describes the way of ‘seizing and holding the truth’ in the most straightforward terms: ‘The first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility ...if humility does not precede, accompany and follow all our good undertakings... pride will tear all good from our hands’ (*ep.* 118.22). Thus, humility acts as something of a meta-virtue for Augustine, strengthening and supporting all further movement into righteousness.<sup>362</sup>

Humility also rightly orders humanity to God, as they recognize their status as sinful creatures: ‘Know what you are, know yourself as weak, know yourself as a man, know yourself as a sinner’ (*s.* 137.44). Pride is a rejection of divine order, a ‘disorderly love of one’s own excellence.’<sup>363</sup> Because humility requires recognition

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<sup>360</sup> See also *conf.* 7.20.26.

<sup>361</sup> Robert R. Barr, ‘The Two Cities in Saint Augustine,’ *Laval theologique et philosophique* 18:2 (1962), 211-29 (222).

<sup>362</sup> Augustine appears to share this view with many other Church Fathers, including Chrysostom, Basil, Clement, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose (SunAe Lee-Koo, ‘Humility as a Key Component of John Wesley’s Understanding of a Christian’s Spiritual Development’ [PhD dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2011]; she is citing Pierre Adnès, ‘Humilité’, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 7 [Paris: Beauchesne, 1969], 1136-88 [1153-68]). However, Deborah Ruddy believes humility to be ‘more fundamental and comprehensive a term’ than the word ‘virtue’ conveys; it is a ‘graced state of being that properly grounds all virtue’ (11 n.36).

<sup>363</sup> Osborn, 170.

of one's place in the divine order, it necessarily arises from truthful self-knowledge.<sup>364</sup> At one level, this self-knowledge is concerned with one's personal sinfulness. In the garden at Milan, he was 'set face to face' with himself and made to confront the ugliness within (*conf.* 8.7.16). Yet on a larger level, Augustine's convictions on humility are a result of his acceptance of man's place in the divine order. His sermons and writings are replete with reminders of man's mortal condition: 'Man, man, notice that you are just a man' (*s.* 341A.2). 'Remember,' he writes, 'you are mortal and clothed in decaying flesh' (*en. Ps.* 38, 39). As sinners, our true self-knowledge is only possible when we are enlightened by God, "'like noonday" before your face' (*conf.* 10.5.7). It comes from within: 'Go not outside yourself, but return within yourself, for truth resides in the inner part of man' (*beata u.*, 39.72).

This is not an abject humiliation, but an understanding of humanity's complete reliance upon the grace of God: 'You are not being told, "Be something less than you are." But "Understand what you are. Understand that you're weak, understand that you are merely human, understand that you are a sinner' (*s.* 137.4).<sup>365</sup> Augustinian humility has been described as a mean between *hubris* and *acedia*: 'But just as we must hold to the path between fire and water so that we are neither burned nor drowned, so we ought to steer our journey between the peak of pride and the whirlpool of indolence' (*ep.* I, 'Letter 48,' 192).<sup>366</sup>

Like order, humility is connected with moderation and limit. In his *Confessions*, Augustine admires the humble, almost Socratic self-knowledge displayed by the Manichaean bishop Faustus as they discuss difficult matters:

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<sup>364</sup> Ruddy notes, 'Self-understanding is inextricably tied to an understanding of the created order' (150).

<sup>365</sup> Augustine, *Sermons*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, pt. 3, v.4, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn NY: New City Press, 1990).

<sup>366</sup> Bobb, 187.

For he was aware that he had no knowledge of these things, and was not ashamed to confess it ...And for that I was even more pleased with him, for more beautiful is the modesty of an ingenuous mind than the acquisition of the knowledge I desired, – and such I found him to be in all the more abstruse and subtle questions. (*conf.* 5.7.12)

As the word ‘modesty’ translates *temperantia*, Augustine characterizes an ingenuous mind – honest, candid, direct, and sincere – as temperate, which is more pleasing to Augustine than knowledge attained in arrogance. Moreover, the phrase ‘of an ingenuous mind’ translates the Latin *confitentis animi*, which Henry Chadwick’s interestingly renders as ‘that admits limitations.’ Thus, the temperate mind recognizes and accepts its restrictions. This reflects an interesting connection to the work as a whole, as *confiteor* is the root verb of *confessiones*. That is, only an ingenuous and temperate mind is capable of writing confessions, rendering it more beautiful than the mind focused solely upon the gathering of knowledge.<sup>367</sup> Thus, through divine order and grounded in humility, one journeys towards the blessedness that is the human *telos*, a journey which involves the work of virtue.

#### **4.2.3 The Complicated Relationship between Augustine and Virtue**

Augustine has a complicated relationship with the idea of virtue. At first glance, it might seem that he alters his position several times in the course of his career.<sup>368</sup> However, a careful reading across his various works reveals development and nuance, but not outright rejection, of his early ideas. For Augustine, virtue originates in the classical virtue of perfected reason and develops into ordered love: and while it is distinguished from pagan virtue, it is never truly a splendid vice.

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<sup>367</sup> I am grateful to Robert Song for bringing this point on *confessiones* to my attention.

<sup>368</sup> Some excellent resources on virtue in Augustine’s thought include Gilson; Kent; Lavere; and Wetzel.

#### 4.2.3.1 Virtue as Perfect Reason

Augustine's early works most frequently display a classical understanding of virtue. *On the Happy Life* echoes the primarily Stoic themes of moderation, restraint of desire, and inner moderation, wherein virtue is identified with the 'measure of the soul' (*beata u.* 4.32).<sup>369</sup> Such moderation is both wisdom and happiness, because wisdom derives from the Truth which is God (*beata u.* 4.34).<sup>370</sup> Virtue enables the soul to rule better and more honorably (*mor.* 5.8) and is 'leading us to a happy life' (*mor.* 15.25). As 'the perfect reason of man', it enables the understanding and enjoyment of God (*diu. qu.* 30.2). It is, in short, 'a mental disposition consistent with reason and nature' (*diu. qu.* 31.1). It is a 'splendid wealth' and a 'stronghold' (*lib. arb.* 1.11). Interestingly, he attributes virtue to those persons who love and value their own rational will (*lib. arb.* 1.13).

*On the Freedom of the Will* connects virtue more directly with the Stoic concepts of 'right reason' as that which cannot be wrongly used (*lib. arb.* 1.12, 2.18), a point noticeably affirmed in the *Retractions* (*retr.* 1.9.6). The virtues are 'both true and unchangeable' and are present to those whose mind can employ reason to approach them (*lib. arb.* 2.10). They are 'great goods' that come only from God's abundant generosity and goodness. Like right reason, they cannot be wrongly used because their essential function is to make the right use of things (*lib. arb.* 2.19).<sup>371</sup> Calling virtue 'the disposition of a soul that cleaves to the unchangeable good' (*lib. arb.* 2.19) locates him squarely within the classical tradition.<sup>372</sup> Through virtue, the soul 'chastens' the body, bringing it into proper order until the day when it encounters

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<sup>369</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth*, 81-2.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Aquinas makes *lib. arb.* 2.19 a capstone of his thought on virtue; see 4.3.2.1 below.

<sup>372</sup> William S. Babcock calls virtues 'the dispositional qualities through which persons ward off or overcome the pulls and tugs of their other loves'; see 'Cupiditas and Caritas: The Early Augustine on Love and Human Fulfillment', in William S. Babcock (ed.), *The Ethics of St. Augustine* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 39-60 (53).

heaven, which is ‘perfect order’ (*lib. arb.* 3.20).<sup>373</sup> Augustine makes an interesting move from action to cognition in the *Soliloquies*, calling virtue ‘that right and perfect looking, which is followed by seeing’ (*sol.* 1.6.13).<sup>374</sup>

Thus, the early Augustine makes use of reason in a manner which he neither entirely supports, nor entirely rejects, in the development of his work. Although the early Augustine appears comfortable with these classical concepts of happiness and virtue, he does not leave them where they are. In *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Augustine provides a clear and quite innovative definition of virtue, which he holds ‘to be nothing else than the perfect love of God’ (*mor.* 15.25).

#### 4.2.3.2 Virtue as Ordered Love

In the historical journey of virtue, Augustine’s primary (and groundbreaking) contribution is that all virtues are forms of love for God, ‘the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony’ (*mor.* 15.22).<sup>375</sup> This definition bears a family resemblance to classical virtue, particularly virtue as forms of *epistēmē* or *phronēsis*. Yet it covers striking new ground, as reason is no longer the content or form of the virtues. Augustine characterizes the difference in this way: *reason is ‘the gaze of the soul’* (*sol.* 1.6.13), while *love is ‘the hand of the soul’* (*s.* 125.7).

*Consider a man's love: think of it as, so to say, the hand of the soul. If it is holding anything, it cannot hold anything else. But that it may be able to hold what it is given to it, it must leave go what it holds already. This I say, see how expressly I say it; ‘Whoever loves the world cannot love God; he has his hand engaged.’* (*s.* 125.7)<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Regarding *On Free Will*, Carney says, ‘Such a will employs the four classical virtues in its ordering endeavors, not as in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, where they are interpreted as four forms of the love of God, but in a more traditional manner’ (14).

<sup>374</sup> See also *ench.* 8.23. Wetzel, *Limits*, calls this a ‘Platonic trope of vision’, which ‘transforms human desires to align them with the object of vision, the good’ (14).

<sup>375</sup> North (referencing *ep.* 155, 4.13) says, ‘A quarter of a century later Augustine still abides by this definition’ (372).

<sup>376</sup> I am grateful to Gerald Schlabach for bringing this sermon to my attention.

Using language reminiscent of Aristotle's *Physics*, Augustine will later name love as the weight of the human soul, that which directs the movements of body and soul towards the object of that love. 'My weight,' he says, 'is my love... by it I am drawn towards that which I desire' (*conf.* 13.9.10).<sup>377</sup> Love, desire, and delight work as a triad, as we desire to fulfill that which delights us and inspires our love.<sup>378</sup> And moving ahead from *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Augustine introduces yet another key component of virtue-as-ordered-love in *On Free Will*, where the power of the will determines 'what each one chooses to pursue and embrace' (*lib. arb.* 1.16.34).<sup>379</sup>

Because the will can pursue what it chooses, the moral issue becomes the proper direction of one's love. 'Are you told not to love anything?' he asks. 'Not at all! If you are to love nothing, you will be lifeless, dead, detestable, miserable. Love, but be careful what you love' (*en. Ps.* 31.2). Virtue, therefore, is nothing more or less than loving rightly. Recognizing and identifying the object of our love is terribly important, Recognizing and identifying the object of our love is terribly important, as it is never inactive but is always propelling its possessor towards some objective.<sup>380</sup> Thus, human love must be *ordered*, reflecting the divine order and aligned towards the *summum bonum*.<sup>381</sup> Augustine keeps this 'brief but true' definition of virtue throughout his life, even into his vision of the heavenly city (*ciu.* 15.22). Our love is rightly ordered when it loves God for himself 'and not another thing in His stead... that which, when we love it, makes us live well and virtuously' (*ciu.* 15.22). Augustine parses this ordering as the distinction between *uti* and *frui*; God alone is to

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<sup>377</sup> See also *ep.* 55.18; *Gn. litt.* 2.1.2; *ciu.* 11.28.

<sup>378</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth*, 97.

<sup>379</sup> Wetzel, *Limits*, calls this 'his theistic reformulation of virtue as the motivational integrity of graced willing' (16).

<sup>380</sup> Gilson, *Augustine*, 135.

<sup>381</sup> 'This idea of *ordo amoris* 'structured all of his thought and linked its various sources' (Lavere, 329).



be loved, and everything else is useful when ordered to the love of God. Thus, love itself is not enough; it must be properly ordered if it to reflect true virtue.

For Augustine, love and virtue intersect at sanctification, as ‘when sanctified we burn with full and perfect love’ (*mor.* 13.22). Through love, the mind is returned to God, and we are conformed to God (*mor.* 12.21, 13.22). This is only possible because Christ is virtue’s exemplar; becoming conformed to God means ‘that we should be conformed to the image of His Son’ (*mor.* 13.22). Christ is ‘the virtue of God, and the wisdom of God’ (*mor.* 13.22, 16.27). To attain virtue is to become sanctified, and to become Christ-like (*mor.* 13.22). Virtue, therefore, is a love rightly ordered, looking only towards God and conforming the bearer to the image of Christ.

#### **4.2.3.3 Virtue as Splendid Vice**

This discussion of virtue now considers Augustine’s oft-cited condemnation of the ‘splendid vices’ of the pagans, arising chiefly from his comments on Roman virtue in book XIX of *City of God*.<sup>382</sup> It is important to note that pagan virtue is what first drew Augustine towards the study of philosophy. He does not believe that wisdom – pagan or otherwise – should be discarded without cause: ‘But let every good and true Christian understand that wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master (*doctr. chr.* 18.28). However, apart from God, pagan virtue ‘is as deceitful as it is proud’ (*ciu.* 19.5). He regards Roman morality as ‘pressing towards the goal of possession – namely, to glory, honor, and power’ (*ciu.* 5.12; see also 14.28). For although the pagan mind and soul appear to rule well over the body and its vices, their

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<sup>382</sup> For a good discussion of Augustine and pagan virtue, see Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008); James Wetzel, ‘Splendid Vices and Secular Virtues: Variations on Milbank’s Augustine’, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32.2 (2004), 271-300; and Wetzel, *Limits*. Interestingly, the phrase itself, *splendida vitia*, is not found in Augustine’s writings. I originally found this claim in Wetzel, ‘Splendid Vices’ (273) and Herdt (45) (who attributes her claim to Joseph Mausbach [45n.21]), and I cannot find evidence to the contrary.

hegemony is inherently flawed, as without God they are ‘prostituted to the corrupting influences of the most vicious demons’:

It is for this reason that the virtues which it seems to itself to possess, and by which it restrains the body and the vices that it may obtain and keep what it desires, are rather vices than virtues so long as there is no reference to God in the matter. For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even then they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices rather than virtues. (*ciu.* 19.25)

Augustine sees two primary things that distinguish ‘true virtue’ from its pagan counterparts: ‘true piety’ and a right understanding of the ‘final happiness’ of humanity (*ciu.* 19.5). He freely states that the ‘virtues of this life’ are ‘certainly its best and most useful possessions’ (*ciu.* 19.5).<sup>383</sup> The centrality of piety is evident in Augustine’s categorization of human righteousness as consisting ‘rather in the remission of sins than in the perfecting of virtues’ (*ciu.* 19.27).

Moreover, this righteousness is ultimately found only in Christ. From pagan virtue, which is ‘necessary and useful in this valley of weeping’ (*en. Ps.* 87.11), the believer shall ‘mount unto that other virtue’ which he describes as ‘the virtue of the contemplation of God alone’, which is ultimately an encounter with both as Christ, ‘the one Virtue.’ Thus, ‘they shall go from virtue to virtue’ (*en. Ps.* 87.11). Whereas pagan virtue aims towards perfection or excellence – a human achievement based upon effort and rationality – true Augustinian virtue aims not for perfection but for the goodness of a life redeemed by Christ.<sup>384</sup> And unlike classical philosophers, Augustine views the ‘habit’ of virtue as problematic, not productive. It is ‘the unregenerate past, the weight which conversion would lift from the convert’s shoulders.’<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> See also *ciu.* 5.19; *trin.* 13.20.26, 14.1.3.

<sup>384</sup> Wetzel, *Limits*, 107.

<sup>385</sup> Markus, *Conversion*, 3; see also Brown, *Augustine*, 143; Herdt, 47; and Kent, 227.

Thus, in the absence of God, pagan virtue is always vulnerable to pagan *superbia*. Augustine continually emphasizes that true virtue is the gift of God, and belongs to no one unless God grants it (*cont.* 1). Moreover, it is bound up with true piety arising from an informed humility: ‘Without true religion or the right worship of the true God, no one can have true virtue, and that no virtue motivated by human glory can be true’ (*ciu.* 5.19).<sup>386</sup> This nuanced, rather complicated understanding of Augustinian virtue sets the stage for his treatment of temperance.

#### **4.2.4 Augustinian Temperance**

Despite his qualifications of ‘pagan virtue,’ Augustine makes use of the cardinal virtues in a variety of settings. They are the qualities that ‘comprise the art of living’ (*trin.* 15.6.10); Augustine calls them the ‘four rivers of Paradise, which ‘signifies the life of the blessed’ (*ciu.* 13.21). Through them, the rational soul ‘makes war upon error and the other inborn vices, and conquers them by fixing its desires upon no other object than the supreme and unchangeable Good’ (*ciu.* 22.24). Among the four cardinal virtues, temperance holds a special interest for Augustine, both conceptually and experientially, and his treatment of it displays both continuity and innovation.

##### **4.2.4.1 Classical Echoes – Temperance as Measure and Restraint**

Augustine’s treatment of temperance contains two echoes of its classical treatment. The first, present largely in his early works and overlapping with Augustine’s earliest thoughts on virtue in general, centers on the concepts of moderation and just measure (*beata u.* 4.33).<sup>387</sup> In one sense, this is a surprisingly Aristotelian notion of virtue, which Aristotle defined as a mean between two extremes (*Eth.Nic.* 1103b21). It also

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<sup>386</sup> Carney calls this ‘a jointly relational and teleological theory of virtue’ (24).

<sup>387</sup> See 4.2.3.1 above.

echoes Cicero, who sought an equivalent to *frugalitas* ('the mother of all virtues') among the Greek virtues and settled on moderation and temperance (*beata u.* 4.31, citing *Disp.* 3.8.16).<sup>388</sup> With temperance derived from 'harmonious balance' [*temperies*] and moderation derived from 'limit' [*modus*], the emphasis is upon the plentitude that lies between neediness and abundance (*beata u.* 4.32, brackets in the original). Here Augustine ties temperance to its Platonic roots as an intellectual virtue; the 'limit of the mind' is wisdom, which is the opposite of folly (*beata u.* 4.32). Augustine thus gives more specific content to his earlier assertion that happiness comes from observing a proper limit, which he calls 'a moderation of the mind' (*beata u.* 1.11).

The second classical echo, which is present throughout his corpus, is the definition of temperance as restraint of desires. Named as a fruit of the Spirit (*ep.* 28.9, *bapt.* 1.17.26), it is 'the disposition that checks and restrains the desire for things that it is wicked to desire' (*lib. arb.* 1.13). It opposes drunkenness and luxury (*en. Ps.* 89.6) and is the 'emancipation from the thralldom of self-indulgence' (*ep.* 144.2). It is the 'girding of the loins' by which one 'departs from evil' (*s.* 58.2). Augustine says that temperance is the particular weapon in man's 'perpetual war with vices' that are 'within us'; it 'bridles carnal lusts, and prevents them from winning the contest of the spirit to wicked deeds,' wherein the flesh and the spirit war against each other (*ciu.* 19.4). While there will never be complete victory in this present life, temperance will, at least, help us 'to preserve the soul from succumbing and yielding to the flesh that lusts against it, and to refuse our consent to the perpetration of sin' (*ciu.* 19.4).

For Augustine, the sphere of temperance is much broader than the physical appetites and extends to 'carnality, curiosity, and conceit' (*trin.* 12). However,

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<sup>388</sup> See 3.2.5.2 above.

temperance is concerned with all desires, even those that are based in God's good creation. The 'honest use' of peace, prosperity, and plenty is equated with temperance, moderation, and sobriety, as opposed to 'running riot in an endless variety of sottish pleasures' (*ciu.* 1.30). Even the marriage bed must be regulated, as 'wantonness in regard to wives is intemperance' (*doctr. chr.* 3.18.27, 3.19.28). And despite its overtly negative gloss, Augustine roots this conception of temperance in a positive goal. Temperance removes us from the 'inordinate love of sensual pleasures' and 'attaches us to objects more lovely in their spirituality, and more delectable by their incorruptibility' (*ciu.* 12.8). It enables the soul to 'draw away from the love of an inferior beauty' and return to God, who is 'its stability and support.' Thus, it may pursue the 'larger beauty' that is the contemplation of God' (*mus.* 6.15.50).

While these classical models are important, Augustine pioneers an even more positive conception of temperance, predicated on his reformulation of virtue as perfect love for God.

#### **4.2.4.2 Temperance as Incorrupt Love**

In *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Augustine defines temperance as 'love giving itself entirely to that which is loved,' as love 'keeping itself entire and incorrupt for God' (*mor.* 15.25). The promise of temperance is 'a kind of integrity and incorruption in the love by which we are united to God' (*mor.* 19.35). The office of temperance 'is in restraining and quieting the passions which make us pant for the things which turn us away from the laws of God and from the enjoyment of His goodness' (*mor.* 19.35). And the 'whole duty' of temperance is 'to put off the old man, and to be renewed in God' (*mor.* 19.36). In a move away from Aristotle, the sphere of temperance, while paradigmatically seen as the physical desires for food,

drink, and sexual pleasure, extends beyond these to the entirety of the human person. Augustine includes ‘popular renown’ and ‘the knowledge of things’ or ‘inquisitiveness’ in the realm of temperance. ‘The soul, then,’ says Augustine, ‘which purposes to keep itself chaste for God must refrain from the desire of vain knowledge like this. For the desire usually produces delusion, so that the soul thinks that nothing exists but what is material’ (*mor.* 21.38).

Temperance affects our relationships and alignment with both temporal and eternal goods. Material things such as food and drink are indeed created by God, but are properly to be subject to us, not us to them. Augustine again makes the distinction between *frui*, that which should be loved, which is ‘God alone,’ and *uti*, ‘all sensible things which are to be despised yet used as this life requires’ (*mor.* 20.37). This right rule involves a dispassionate response to their allure: ‘The man, then, who is temperate in such mortal and transient things has his rule of life confirmed by both Testaments, that he should love none of these things, nor think them desirable for their own sakes, but should use them as far as is required for the purposes and duties of life, with the moderation of an employer instead of the ardor of a lover’ (*mor.* 21.39). This formulation of temperance takes an interesting stand both on the Aristotelian view of virtue as moderation and the Stoic ideal of suppression of the passions. The cardinal virtues are all ‘forms of an *intemperate* love for God.’<sup>389</sup> One should approach all ‘sensible things’ with moderation, but only because one’s ardor is already directed towards God, the *summum bonum*.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1950), 267.

<sup>390</sup> Ramsey, *Ethics*, attributes this to Jesus’ ‘ethic of the extreme’ (267).

#### 4.2.4.3 Conclusions on Temperance

It is worth asking whether Augustine explicitly identifies temperance with virtue's 'perpetual war with vices' (*ciu.* 19.4). However, the evil of consenting to sin, against which it wars, will not be 'removed from this life' by temperance (*ciu.* 19.4). Thus, Augustine's temperance sounds more like Aristotelian continence than Aristotelian temperance, in that internal struggle remains.

In *De Moribus*, Augustine concludes the section on temperance with these comments, 'These remarks on temperance are few in proportion to the greatness of the theme, but perhaps too many in view of the task on hand' (*mor.* 21.39). Like Plato, and unlike Aristotle, Augustine connected deeply with the varieties of meaning available to temperance.<sup>391</sup> This is unsurprising, given the correspondence between the spheres of temperance and his particular struggles.<sup>392</sup> What begins in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* as one of four cardinal virtues is evolving into a foundational aspect of Augustine's moral theology and soteriology. Yet as Augustine deals with both philosophical and ecclesiastical matters in his thought and writings, he often works with multiple, somewhat overlapping categories. One example of this is the relationship of temperance to *continence*, its subordinate (in a classically philosophical sense).

#### 4.2.5 Continence in Augustine's Moral Theology

In the early patristic period, 'continence' generally signified the abstention from sexual activity, even between married persons. With roots in classical philosophy, it was regarded as a hallmark of the devoted Christian life, one of the primary ways

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<sup>391</sup> North, 379. She centers her discussion of Augustine's use of *temperantia* around three 'central ideas': *conversio*, *superbia*, and *voluntas* (370).

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

devout believers distinguished themselves from their pagan neighbors. Thus, it is no surprise that Augustine's understanding of continence begins here.

#### 4.2.5.1 Continence as Lifestyle and Practice

Upon reading the *Hortensius*, Augustine felt an immediate attraction to the Stoic recommendation to sexual continence, not least because of its ambivalent attitude towards the body.<sup>393</sup> While his relationship with his concubine was physically rewarding (and while the emotional component was, by all accounts, equally satisfying), Augustine's 'conversion to philosophy' left him internally divided.<sup>394</sup> Other influences, such as vestiges of Manichaeism and the tradition of the continent 'sage,' added to his inner turmoil.<sup>395</sup> It was here that he uttered the famous entreaty, 'Grant me continence, but not yet' (*conf.* 7.16).

This idea of continence as limited to sexual renunciation appears only twice in *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, where it, along with *abstinence*, appears to denote the lifestyle choices that accompany the life of faith. Augustine contrasts the 'abstinence' of the Manicheans with what he calls the 'customs and notable continence of perfect Christians, who have thought it right not only to praise but also to practice the height of chastity' and later calls 'absolute continence' (*mor.* 31.65) and 'abstinence and continence' (*mor.* 31.66). However, he hastens to add that while this 'notable continence' of the anchorites and cenobites is to be commended, it does not eclipse that of the Catholic clergy, 'whose virtue seems to me more admirable and more worthy of commendation on account of the greater difficulty of preserving it amidst the manifold varieties of men, and in this life of turmoil!' (*mor.* 32.69). This

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<sup>393</sup> Margaret R. Miles, *Augustine on the Body* (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 48.

<sup>394</sup> Chadwick, 24.

<sup>395</sup> Miles, *Augustine*, 53.



sentiment is echoed in *On the Good of Marriage*, where he states, ‘Total abstinence is easier than perfect moderation’ (*b. coniug.* 21).

Augustine does not hold long to the narrow definition of continence as sexual abstinence. His conversion experience breaks through this restricted meaning and places continence in an entirely new light.

#### **4.2.5.2 Continence as Conversion and Pivot**

In recalling his conversion in *Confessions* VIII, Augustine is clearly suffering, torn between his desire for God and his desire for sexual activity. ‘Grant me chastity and continence,’ implored Augustine, ‘but not yet. For I was afraid lest You should hear me soon, and soon deliver me from the disease of concupiscence, which I desired to have satisfied rather than extinguished (*conf.* 8.7.17).’ He then describes the approach of a beautiful, chaste woman ‘whose very name was Lady Continence,’ and whom he was invited to hold in a ‘chaste embrace’ (*conf.* 8.11.27). Continence herself is present, ‘not barren, but a fruitful mother of children of joys, by You, O Lord, her Husband’ (*conf.* 8.11.27). Because she appears in embodied form and greets him as a stranger, he realizes that continence cannot come from within: ‘He is addressed by the very virtue he lacks, and the form of the address emphasizes his own inability to fill the lack himself... He has reached an impasse.’<sup>396</sup>

Where to go from this impasse? Augustine still desires to embrace Lady Continence, who then advises the mortification of his ‘earthly, unclean members’ (*conf.* 8.11.27). Now realizing the significance of this embrace, he finds release from his inner turmoil via resignation, an acceptance of the gift of grace which can only come from God: ‘You lift up the person whom you fill’ (*conf.* 8.28.39). If God

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<sup>396</sup>Wetzel, *Limits*, 151, citing *conf.* 8.11.27.

wishes for him to live this life, God shall enable him to do so: ‘And my whole hope is only in Your exceeding great mercy. Give what You command, and command what You will. You impose continence upon us, nevertheless, when I perceived, says one, that I could not otherwise obtain her, except God gave her me’ (*conf.* 10.29.40). The innovation of Book X is that one’s ascent to God now results in an ‘inspired’ continence, a striking departure from tradition. For the Greek Fathers, this order would have been reversed; they viewed life as an extended purgation, the continent lifestyle would be the means by which man ascends to God, not the result of this ascent. Thus, Augustine’s view of continence as effect, not cause, of man’s spiritual ascent clearly points to the role played by grace and to the nature of a changed life as the gift of God.<sup>397</sup> This occasions what biblical scholars call a *pivot*, wherein the events following the pivotal moment are a radical reversal of the events that precede it. The Augustine departing Book X is not the same man who entered it; Lady Continence has enfolded him, and he has submitted.

The echo of 1 John 2.16 is equally significant, as continence acquires new territory: ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life’ (*conf.* 10.30.41). In addressing the trifold lusts of the flesh, the eyes, and the world, Augustine takes continence firmly out of isolation in the sexual realm and identifies it as a virtue of the entire person – heart and mind, body and soul. This alteration is doubly important: First, continence is rooted in the heart and the mind, not primarily in the body; second, it is given to us by God, a gift of grace. Continence is, therefore, central to Augustine’s conversion narrative.<sup>398</sup> In a manner similar to Plato’s

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<sup>397</sup> I am grateful to Oliver O’Donovan for bringing this to my attention; he credits the observation to Andrew Louth.

<sup>398</sup> James O’Donnell, *Augustine* (Boston MA: Twayne Publishers, 1985) remarks, ‘Everything about *conf.* as literary artifact conspires to emphasize the place of *continentia* in Augustine’s view of his life and conversion’ (200).

*Charmides*, the story reveals in both dialogue and action the potential fullness of the role of continence in the life of faith.

#### 4.2.5.3 Continence as Operative Love

In his treatise *On Continence*,<sup>399</sup> Augustine calls continence ‘the virtue of the soul’ (*cont.* 1). It is, first and foremost, the ‘gift of God’: ‘No one can be continent, unless God grant it’ (*cont.* 1).<sup>400</sup> The actions of continence, ‘when it curbs and restrains lusts,’ are twofold: it ‘both seeks the good unto the immortality of which we aim, and rejects the evil with which in his mortality we contend’ (*cont.* 6). Augustine is interacting here with Romans 7, where Paul laments that he is unable to align his intentions and actions. And here, as in the *Confessions*, continence is the virtue not only of the flesh, but also of the mouth and the heart; continence ‘must be set there, where the conscience even of them who are silent speaks’ (*cont.* 2). Continence is also the remedy for unbounded pride; it will ‘restrain the proud appetite of man; by which he is self-pleased, and unwilling to be found worthy of blame’ (*cont.* 13). In another echo of Romans, Augustine says that a ‘true’ continence ‘wills not to repress some evils by other evils, but to heal all evils by goods’ (*cont.* 28).<sup>401</sup> The language also echoes Augustine’s earlier, more ‘philosophical’ treatises. Continence is associated with many of the same classical standards as temperance and virtue in general. Regarding marital sexuality, continence ensures ‘that a measure be observed’, for the purpose of ‘moderating, and in a certain way limiting in married

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<sup>399</sup> For an excellent article on this treatise, see David G. Hunter, ‘The Date and Purpose of Augustine’s *De Continentia*’, *Augustinian Studies* 26.2 (1995), 7-24. Also helpful is Michael R. Rackett, ‘Anti-Pelagian Polemic in Augustine’s *De Continentia*’, *Augustinian Studies* 26.2 (1995), 25-50.

<sup>400</sup> Gerald Schlabach, *For the Joy Set Before Us: Augustine and Self-Denying Love* (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001) says, ‘One can only become continent *in a continent way* – by relinquishing control, by respecting, by asking for help, by receiving as a gift’ (61). See also Rackett, 29-30.

<sup>401</sup> Rom. 12.21.

persons the lust of the flesh, and ordering in a certain way within fixed limits its unquiet and inordinate motion' (*cont.* 27). With the date of this treatise set around 421, this gives additional support for the seriousness of Augustine's use of the philosophical ideas of moderation, measure, and limit.<sup>402</sup>

Yet the expansion of the sphere of continence, progressive though it is, does not fully reveal its fullest meaning. Continence is that 'by which we are gathered together and brought back to the One from whom we have dispersed into many things' (*conf.* 10.29.40). It is a gathering, a re-membering of the Christian person, body and soul, a 'single-minded and single-hearted devotion to God.'<sup>403</sup> This restoration has been framed by one scholar in the language of health, with continence 'ordered to the positive purpose of healing.'<sup>404</sup> Continence is nothing less than the 'operative mode of Augustinian *caritas*.'<sup>405</sup> This operative mode contains a 'deep grammar' the difference between continent clinging and concupiscent grasping.<sup>406</sup> Humans will grasp at lesser goods in order to possess them, but they must cling to God, even as he grasps us. However, we may cling continently to each other: 'When human beings rightly love their neighbors, friends, and fellow Christians in God, according to Augustine, they also cling to one another rightly.'<sup>407</sup> By clinging continently to God and others, the self is restored to a place where it can continue the journey to the *telos* of blessedness.

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<sup>402</sup> David Hunter believes that 'it is safe to assume that *De Continentia* is a faithful representation of Augustine's mature thought' (personal conversation).

<sup>403</sup> Harrison, *Christian Truth*, 3.

<sup>404</sup> William S. Babcock, 'Augustine and the Spirituality of Desire,' in *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 193. Babcock calls this healing 'a reparation of my very self,' an expression he finds so compelling that it appears four times in two pages (193-4). See also Rackett, 32.

<sup>405</sup> Schlabach, *Joy*, 58; see also 79, 154, 167.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-63.

<sup>407</sup> Schlabach, *Joy*, 77 (within 67-78).

#### 4.2.5.4 Conclusions on Continenence

Augustine's treatment of continence, like much of his work, can be perplexing. It refers, almost simultaneously, to a decision on sexual activity, a restraint upon various human temptations, and a function of God's love in the human heart. Such divergence can be difficult to negotiate. Approaching continence as a virtue – or, as Schlabach stated earlier, as an operative mode – serves to bridge the gap between the various conceptions, given that a virtue is a fixed disposition issuing in a reliable mode of actions. This provides continence with more interiority than in its present conception, while retaining more of a connection to praxis than if it was merely an attitude.<sup>408</sup> Thus, Augustinian continence is neither merely an ascetic practice nor an Aristotelian sub-virtue. It is, rather, the companion of salvation, the guardian of both body and soul, and the gift of God.

#### 4.2.6 Particularities of Augustinian Temperance and Continenence

Temperance, for Augustine, is first and foremost the soul keeping itself entire and incorrupt for the sake of the love of God. By reframing virtue in terms of the love of God, Augustine gives virtue a positive content that simultaneously acknowledges human frailty and orients human efforts to a *telos* both external to and greater than oneself. This reframing means that temperance, in particular, acquires a positive content that mediates its usual negative connotation of restraint. Even the language of limit and restraint has positive overtones: Augustine's use of *est enim temperantia* for 'admits limitations' reveals that humility requires a modest and temperate mind, which is beautiful precisely because it acknowledges its limitations (*conf.* 5.7.12). With continuing connections to the classical ideas of control of desire, measure,

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<sup>408</sup> *On the Good of Marriage* calls continence 'a virtue, not of the body, but of the soul', which is 'sometimes shown in work, sometimes lie hid in habit (*in habitu latent*)' (*b. coniug.* 21.25). Both Hunter ('Date and Purpose,' 17) and Rackett (29) also call continence a virtue.

moderation, and limit, temperance regains a place of primacy in Augustine's moral thought that it has lacked since Cicero.

Augustinian continence is more of an amalgam. It is a lifestyle, a calling, a gift of God, and a virtue. It is operative, effective, and functional. It is the means whereby the grace of God is activated within the human soul, and the means by which human beings reach and maintain their place in the order of God's world. The idea of continence as *functional* is an interesting echo of the Aristotelian function argument, whereby human beings accomplish the central purpose of their existence *qua* human beings.<sup>409</sup> As discussed above, the fluidity of Augustine's thought is reflected in the easy interchange of the terms *temperance* and *continence*. Within this fluidity lies the correlation of the idea of temperance as a virtue or an internal state and the actual practices of continence, abstinence, & chastity, as Augustine calls virtue 'efficacy in action' (*mor.* 16.27).

Augustine appears to treat the concepts of temperance and continence somewhat in parallel; his works contain examinations of both, without any systematic discussion of how the two are related. When read against the classical distinction of the two, this collapse can be somewhat confusing. Despite Augustine's clear philosophical abilities, his primary vocation expressed itself in preaching, exegesis, and rhetoric. Although quite capable of analytical philosophy when necessary, he tended towards a fluidity of language.<sup>410</sup> This proves important in his treatment of temperance and continence. On the one hand, Augustine engages temperance more systematically in his early works, working with (albeit expanding) the framework of the tetrad. However, as his work progresses, he gives an increasing amount of

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<sup>409</sup> See *Eth.Nic.* I.7 and 3.1.2.1 above.

<sup>410</sup> I am grateful to Gerald Schlabach for discussion around this issue.

attention to continence, with temperance fading into the background (although not disappearing entirely). Is Augustine changing his terminology or his ethical position?

This may be accounted for in several ways. Given the role that sexual struggles played in his conversion, he had an obvious interest in explicating continence, as traditionally understood. Relatedly, although he was not a monk in the still-developing classical sense, he was also in the monastic tradition (even while pastoring, bishoping, and otherwise involving himself in ‘worldly’ matters) in which sexual abstinence played a role that modern interpreters, for various anti-puritanical reasons, probably downplay. Finally, the Pelagian controversy, for better or worse, gave Augustine rhetorical reasons to talk far more about continence than temperance, inasmuch as the controversy led him into debates over original sin as inherited from Adam and Eve, with sexual transmission as the link in the human generational chain. There is no hard evidence, on either side, to assume there is any substantive difference between the two, although ‘continence’ appears to have a wider application than ‘temperance’ throughout his corpus. Additionally, the terms *temperantia* and *continentia* were often used synonymously in moral discourse.<sup>411</sup> Thus, his conflation of the terms temperance and continence, while somewhat jarring, is more practical than conceptual; at no point in his corpus does Augustine make a substantive distinction between them. And while he does not formally distinguish between the tasks of philosophy and theology,<sup>412</sup> he tends to discuss temperance in a more classically ‘philosophical’ sense and continence in a more ‘religious’ context. Therefore, the working assumption is that Augustine probably conflates the two terms and used them more or less interchangeably.

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<sup>411</sup> See 3.2.5.3.

<sup>412</sup> See 4.2.1.3 above.

Finally, temperance and continence are special for Augustine in a way that supervenes upon the theoretical. Like the figure of Socrates in the *Charmides*, who must exercise self-control at the sight of the beautiful youth, Augustine's discussions of these virtues are always conducted with them present, enhancing the conversation with their silent but obvious presence.

#### **4.2.7 Conclusions on Augustinian Temperance and Continence**

In considering Augustine's use of and relationships with the virtues of temperance and continence, some questions are more easily answered than others. Some points are quite clear: Augustine makes mention, throughout his corpus, of these two virtues. He primarily discusses temperance when his mind is considering the more classical questions, such as in the early works of *On the Happy Life*, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, and *On Free Will*, as well as in *City of God* when he is considering the contributions of Varro and others. That is, he appears to remember temperance during his more philosophical moments. What is also clear is the degree to which continence emerges as a wholly foundational virtue for Augustine's moral theology. Present at his conversion, the very result of his ascent to God, and representing a singleness of heart and mind in devotion to God – continence loomed large on Augustine's entire theological landscape.

Less clear, however, is the relationship between the two terms, and the degree to which Augustine himself recognizes their differences, or even concerns himself with them. What is also unclear, in light of his views of the ongoing struggle against *concupiscentia*, is whether *temperantia* (in the sense derived from *sōphrosynē*) is even a human possibility for Augustine. Rist observes that classical *akrasia* appears in Augustine's early thinking, connected to discrete and occasional sins; while the



mature Augustine saw humanity's struggle with *concupiscentia*, which is 'all-pervasive.'<sup>413</sup> Yet both *akrasia* and *concupiscentia* seem to signify an ongoing struggle against the appetites which the Greeks would have found incompatible with true temperance or *sōphrosynē*. Augustine explicitly identifies temperance with virtue's 'perpetual war with vices' (*ciu.* 19.4). However, the evil of consenting to sin, against which it wars, will not be 'removed from this life' by temperance (*ciu.* 19.4). Thus, Augustine's temperance sounds more like Aristotelian continence than Aristotelian temperance, inasmuch as internal struggle remains. So does Augustine, for theological reasons, leave behind the classical category of temperance in favor of continence? Or is the conflation really more practical than theoretical, reflecting his tendency towards fluidity of terms? I am inclined to believe the former, and to state that, despite his use of the term, Augustine's theological anthropology ultimately did not allow him to view temperance as a truly functional category, in the way it had been for Plato and Aristotle (and would be for Aquinas).

The question is this: Why bother considering Augustinian temperance and continence? Some commentators consider Augustine far too negative in his views of the body and original sin to have anything positive to contribute to a discussion of temperance.<sup>414</sup> However, to confine an examination of Augustine's views on temperance to texts on original sin is to miss the fullness breadth and richness of his position. It is certainly true that Augustine struggled mightily with his sexual appetites, particularly in his youth, and this struggle is apparent both in his location of original sin and its transmission in the sexual act, and also in his deep connection to and explication of the virtue which addresses that struggle. A recovery of Augustine's ongoing relationship with temperance and continence may serve as a

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<sup>413</sup> Rist, *Augustine*, 137.

<sup>414</sup> One example of this position is White, 54-8.

welcome complement to existing emphases on his sexual austerity, and may enable a conversation with Augustine that celebrates his wisdom without being taken hostage by his particular take on sexual issues. Instead, his experiences may have yielded an additional richness to his thought, perhaps being ‘one of those for whom, in the words of Blake, the road of excess led to the palace of wisdom.’<sup>415</sup>

Modern sensibilities may view Augustine as radically ascetic. Yet his positions were, in reality, somewhat moderate in nature given his social, cultural, and ecclesiological locations. Moreover, an understanding of the particular context of Augustine’s thought is essential. Paul Ramsey insightfully notes that much of the current discomfort with Augustine’s association of sexuality with sin derives from his particular (and contemporaneous) view of the core of a human person, what Ramsey calls Augustine’s ‘rational voluntarism.’ Twenty-first century moral discourse does not hold the same view of the nature and function of rationality; and Ramsey maintains that by cogently discerning the current starting point *vis-à-vis* that of Augustine, the conversation will likely become much more fruitful.<sup>416</sup>

Temperance emerges from its first major treatment within the Christian tradition with both classical content and an innovative association with love. It would be almost a millennium before any significant reformulation of the cardinal virtues, which happens at the hand of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> North, 379.

<sup>416</sup> Paul Ramsey, ‘Human Sexuality in the History of Redemption’, in *The Ethics of St. Augustine*, ed. William S. Babcock (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1991), 115-46 (119).

<sup>417</sup> For a discussion of the cardinal virtues during the time preceding Aquinas, see Istvan P. Bejczy, *The Cardinal Virtues in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); he states, ‘During the Middle Ages, the idea that prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance constitute the four prime moral virtues went nearly unchallenged’ (1).

### 4.3 Thomistic Temperance

Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* is a concert of philosophical and theological thought, as strands of classical and Christian traditions, scripture and systematics are woven together in a fresh and systematic way. His treatise on temperance is a good example of this interaction, as it draws from many disparate sources in its treatment of the topic. This study will be dealing largely with the questions from the *Secunda Secundae*, qq.141-170, regarding temperance, but will discuss various portions of the *Summa* and other works as necessary.

#### 4.3.1 Theological and Philosophical Bases

Like Augustine, Aquinas engages a wide array of theological and philosophical traditions in his moral theology. It is true that Augustine reveals more of a Platonic and Stoic background while Aquinas displays a more overt Aristotelian influence; however, both theologians employ the vast majority of the traditions they inherit.<sup>418</sup> Within the works of Aquinas, Augustine and Aristotle are certainly the most common 'academic' sources (with 1,630 and 1,546 citations respectively). Other regular interlocutors include Cicero (often cited as 'Tully'), Gregory, Ambrose, Pseudo Dionysius, and Jerome.<sup>419</sup> However, scripture is by far the most frequent source of citations, totaling more than his citations of Aristotle and Augustine combined. They approached their task in different manners. As a rule, Augustine does not break his conversation into 'philosophy' and 'theology,' viewing them as two aspects of the same task. For Aquinas, the distinction between 'philosophy' and 'theology' is

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<sup>418</sup> One recent source on Platonism in Aquinas is Fran O'Rourke, 'Aquinas and Platonism', in *Contemplating Aquinas*, ed. Fergus Kerr (London: SCM Press, 2003), 247-79; see footnote 4 for his list of the most relevant studies. He calls Aquinas 'an unwitting, avowed, but critical Platonist' (250).

<sup>419</sup> An excellent resource here is Servais-Théodore Pinckaers, 'The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas', in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington DC: Georgetown Press, 2002), 17-29; I have drawn the above figures from this source (17).

sufficiently developed for the broad use of Aristotle to be both deliberate and noticeable.

The moral theology of Aquinas therefore shares characteristics of both the classical and Christian traditions. Like Aristotle and Augustine, Aquinas frames his moral theory within a eudemonistic teleology; for Aquinas, the *summum bonum* is the *beatitudo* of the vision of God. Aquinas structured his moral theology around beatitude and virtue as a corrective to the moral methodology of his day, which consisted largely of lists of moral duties and lacked a coherent and unifying theme. Constructing the moral life around the virtues (with them acting in service to natural and supernatural happiness) provided a more comprehensive and intelligible foundation than cobbling together disparate elements of existing systems.

#### **4.3.1.1 General and Human Goodness**

For Aquinas, happiness is ‘gaining perfect good’ (I-II.5.1).<sup>420</sup> Aquinas sees an interdependence of sorts between such concepts as goodness, being, and truth. And much as Aristotle located *eudaimonia* in perfectly fulfilling our human nature, Aquinas locates ‘goodness’ in truthful or perfected being (I.5.3). But goodness and being are not interchangeable, as Aquinas notes, ‘The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable’ and ‘things always desire their perfection’ (I.5.1). For Aquinas, to be human is to possess agency, to be the source of one’s actions.<sup>421</sup> This agency does not arise from pure instinct, as it does for other, non-rational animals, but rather from the distinctly human capacity to rationally perceive and pursue the good (I.83.1; I.103.5 *ad* 2, 3). The question is, then, what does it mean

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<sup>420</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references from the *Summa Theologica* will be from *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne Ltd., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1920).

<sup>421</sup> For the foundations of my understanding of this section, see Porter, *Recovery*, 33-99.

to perceive the good and act towards it? To answer this requires gaining an understanding of what is truly good for humans, which is an extension of general goodness (I-II.1-3).

Despite human rationality, Aquinas follows Aristotle in recognizing the animality also present in human nature. All animals will seek the good for themselves (I.5.4), whether through the workings of instinct or something higher, and human rational actions will in some ways correspond to the actions of the non-rational animals (I.60.5). Yet what is this goodness of which Aquinas speaks? As noted earlier, Aquinas locates goodness in perfected being, existing as one ought to be (I.5.1, 3, 5). Goodness is not equated with being in a strict sense; rather, goodness is being exhibiting a sort of desirability, in that goodness signifies perfection which is desirable (I.5.1, 48.1). For Aquinas, the primary good for all things is its perfection, according to its own particular nature (I.5.1, I.6.1, I.60.3, 4). Echoing Aristotle's function argument (*Eth.Nic.* 1097b24-27), Aquinas claims that the knowledge of what something is can lead us into the apprehension of its particular good.

#### **4.3.1.2 Natural and Supernatural Ends – *Eudaimonia* and *Beatitudo***

While Aquinas shadows both Aristotle and Augustine in his affirmation of a *telos*, he follows Augustine on the nature of that *telos*. For Aquinas, man's ultimate end lies outside any natural purview, a position that is 'theocentrically humanistic.'<sup>422</sup> As creatures which exist on both the natural and supernatural planes, humans have, unlike other animals, both natural and supernatural ends.

The partial happiness we can hold in this life a man can secure for himself, as he can virtue, in the activity of which it consists: we shall discuss this later. But man's complete happiness, as we have found,

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<sup>422</sup> Stephen J. Pope, 'Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas', in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 30-51 (49).

consists in the vision of the divine essence, and this is beyond the natural stretch of any creature. (I-II.5.5)

Like Aristotle, Aquinas posits the question, ‘What is happiness?’ That is, what is the state of perfection of the human being? Yet unlike Aristotle, Aquinas sees the ultimate end of rational creatures to be supernatural rather than natural. This supernatural end is found in the perception of God, the beatific vision: ‘Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence (I-II.3.5). This vision is possible because of divine grace, as ‘all knowing according to a manner of created thing falls short of seeing what god really is, for the divine infinitely surpasses every created nature’ (I-II.5.5). Yet, it is also related to our rationality: ‘Complete happiness requires the mind to come through to the essence itself of the first cause. And so it will have its fulfillment by union with God as its object, that in him alone our happiness lies’ (I-II.3.8). This contemplation of the divine or divine beatitude is achieved as one participates in the divine life through the power of Christ.<sup>423</sup> This ethic subsumes the important but ultimately secondary issues of command and virtue under the headship of a supernatural *telos*.<sup>424</sup> However, the existence and primacy of supernatural ends does not negate the existence or importance of our natural ones. Aquinas recognizes the presence and role of these natural ends for creatures participating in the natural law (I-II.1.8); for him they represented an approximate moral *telos* for rational animals.<sup>425</sup>

The ultimate point of human moral development, of this pursuit of natural ends, is the development of good action. These good actions both serve and are served by the movement of human beings towards their state of perfected being. The question then arises again as to what constitutes natural human perfection. Aquinas

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<sup>423</sup> Kerr calls this ‘the divinely given fulfillment of an Aristotelian conception of human flourishing’ (132).

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 118-9.

<sup>425</sup> Porter, *Recovery*, 67.

offers us two ways of considering the question. Proximately, it is the perfection of natural human abilities (I-II.5.5, see above); ultimately, it is the attainment of the object of human happiness (I-II.3.1). Thus, human happiness is both the object of our action, and the action itself. It is the practical function of our intellect expressing itself in and through our actions (I.79.11). Unlike other creatures, human beings are not guided by instinct in the perception and desiring of what is good. They must constantly evaluate a variety of perceived goods, and will do so successfully only when guided by both natural rationality and supernatural grace (I-II.8.1). And still the ultimate good is the contemplation of God in the beatific vision.

#### **4.3.1.3 Grace, Natural Law, and the *Exitus-Reditus* of the *Summa***

Aquinas structures the *Summa* to reflect the design of *exitus-redditus*, or ‘procession from and return to’ the living God. In the *Prima pars*, Aquinas describes the love of the creator God as it flows from Him into the created order. In the *Secunda pars*, he examines the return of all creation to its Creator (through means both natural and divine); lastly, he describes in the *Tertia pars* how this return is accomplished through Christ and the sacraments.<sup>426</sup> Aquinas sees humanity as being fitted, by design, to the possibility of achieving these ends: ‘That man has the capacity appears from the fact that his mind can apprehend good which is universal and unrestricted and his will can desire it. Therefore he is open to receive it’ (I-II.5.1). Not only are humans capable of seeing God, they can mirror His creativity and intelligence through the attainment of their natural ends, fashioning their lives ‘as God creates the world.’<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Kerr notes that the natural ordering of creation towards their natural ends, far from being passively Aristotelian, is actually ‘theologically grounded’ (115).

<sup>427</sup> Pope, 31 n.7 (citation of Etienne Gilson).

To many Christians, the idea of natural law has ‘an almost Pelagian insouciance,’ as if it disregards the devastating effects of the sinful nature.<sup>428</sup> Yet Aquinas read his theory of natural law through the lens of grace, in such a way that each kept its place in the larger picture: ‘Though grace is more powerful than nature, nevertheless nature is more essential to man, and therefore more permanent’ (I-II.94.6 *ad 2*). Peter Geach correctly interprets Aquinas in stating that ‘a moral code “freely adopted” that ignores the built-in teleologies of human nature can only lead to disaster.’<sup>429</sup> For Aquinas, nature and grace are functional complements whose interaction accounts for both God’s and humanity’s role in the virtuous life. However, it is not just natural law which must be infused with grace. Morals and grace are also interrelated, one as the context for the other. Natural law is indeed present in Aquinas’s thinking, but it is wholly submitted, not just to grace, but also to virtue. While the virtues may assist us in fulfilling the requirements of the natural law, the larger goal is to be virtuous.

### 4.3.2 Virtue and the Virtues

Aquinas’ definition of virtue is multi-faceted, engaging a wide range of both philosophical and theological components.<sup>430</sup> Aquinas’ typology contains three main kinds of virtue: intellectual, moral (also using the designation ‘cardinal’), and theological. He follows Aristotle in his treatment of the intellectual virtues, which include ‘wisdom’ (*sapientia*, Gk. *sophia*), ‘science’ (*scientia*, Gk. *epistēmē*), and ‘understanding’ (*intellectus*, Gk. *nous*). To these he adds the intellectual-moral virtue

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<sup>428</sup> Ralph McInerny, ‘Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleanore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 196-216 (213).

<sup>429</sup> Geach, vii.

<sup>430</sup> Aquinas’ concise yet comprehensive treatment of the virtues is found in the *prima secundae*, qq.49-67. A good collection is *Treatise on the Virtues*, trans. John A. Oesterle (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).



of ‘prudence’ (*prudentia*, Gk. *phronēsis*), as well as the pseudo-intellectual virtue of ‘art’ (*ars*, Gk. *technē*). In a departure from Aristotle, Aquinas keeps the classical tetrad of cardinal virtues (*prudentia*, *iusticia*, *fortitudo*, and *temperantia*).<sup>431</sup> The moral virtues Aquinas saw as the perfection of the appetitive powers of the soul (I-II.50.3). Justice perfects the rational appetite, also called the will; fortitude perfects the irascible appetite, and temperance perfects the concupiscible appetite. The cardinal virtues must be addressed after the intellectual virtues, as the latter are required for the proper functioning of the former. Lastly, he follows theological tradition by including the theological virtues of ‘faith’, ‘hope’, and ‘charity’ (*fides*, *spes*, and *caritas*), which were essential to bridge the gap between natural and supernatural happiness (I-II.62.1).

#### **4.3.2.1 The Thomistic Concept of Virtue**

Following Aristotle, Aquinas calls virtue a good habit (I-II.55.1 *sed*). Habits are qualities which are ‘difficult to change’ and are related to our actions (I-II.49), affecting them in beneficial ways (I-II.55.3). This resides in the very nature of virtue as an ‘operative habit’ (I-II.55.4). Thus, a habit is something which effects change upon the powers of the soul. These powers are both rational and irrational, and are the intellect and the appetitive powers. The appetitive powers consist of the rational appetite, which is the will, and the irrational or sense appetites. The irrational appetites are the concupiscible and the irascible, which lead us towards the pleasant and away from the unpleasant, and towards the beneficial and away from the harmful, respectively. Any of these powers may be directed in many ways towards many ends. Because not all ends are good, and because not all desires will lead us towards the

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<sup>431</sup> Aquinas departs from an Aristotelian format in his categorization of the virtues as theological, intellectual, and cardinal. His inclusion of the ‘cardinal’ virtues likely comes via Ambrose, Gregory, and Cicero; see I-II.61.1 *sed*; 61.2 *sed*; 61.3 *sed*, *obj.* 1-3.

proper goods, good habits are essential. Through them, humans can create proper and stable dispositions towards good actions and ultimately, to human perfection (I-II.4.4). That which perfects these powers Aquinas calls a virtue (I-II.55.1).

These perfected dispositions are intimately linked to human rationality. Closely following Augustine (*lib. arb.* 2.19), Aquinas defines virtue as ‘a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us’ (I-II.55.4 *obj* 1). It is also intimately related to human goodness, ‘since it is virtue that makes its subjects good’ (I-II.55.4 *obj* 1). In one sense Thomistic virtue is ordinal, in that one acts either in conformity to reason (virtue) or as a deformity of reason (vice). However, Aquinas follows Aristotle in designating virtue a mean between the two extremes of excess and deficiency (I-II.64.1 *sed*). Because the mean is rational and not ‘real’ (I-II.64.2), it is phronetically determined by circumstances; thus, while some actions may appear extreme in their practice, they are still virtuous through their adherence to the order of reason.<sup>432</sup>

#### **4.3.2.2 Attainment of Virtue**

Thomistic virtue is achieved in two different, though complementary, ways. It may be ‘acquired’ through habituation and practice (I-II.63.2); that is, a sustained and rationally guided human effort will result in the inculcation of moral virtue. Virtue may also be ‘infused’ through divine action, a gracious gift that supersedes human effort (I-II.63.3). As acquired virtues, they will result in the natural happiness which is the perfection of human reason; as infused virtues, they will yield the supernatural happiness which is a divine gift (I-II.63.4). The infused moral virtues are also

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<sup>432</sup> Aquinas illustrates this point with the classical virtues of magnanimity and magnificence (I-II.64.1 *ad* 2) and the Christian virtues of poverty and virginity (I-II.64.1 *ad* 3).

connected with the theological virtue of charity, ‘since it is through them that man performs each different kind of good work’ (I-II.65.3 *ad* 2, 3).

Aquinas ordered the virtues by level of importance, following a threefold criterion. First, each virtue may be assessed by the excellence of its source. Thus, the theological virtues were superior to the moral and intellectual virtues due to their superior origins, arising as they do as a divine gift and not from mere human rationality. Second, the respective excellence of a particular virtue may be derived from the excellence of its object. That is, justice is a greater virtue than temperance, because the object of activity – the common good – is greater than the object of temperance, which is the good of the individual (I-II.66.4). Third, the excellence of a virtue may also be determined by the greatness of the subject of its action. Thus, justice is greater than temperance as the will is greater than the concupiscible appetite (I-II.66.3 *ad* 3).

For Aquinas (as for Aristotle), the moral life consists of more than a series of discrete actions aimed at one’s goal, but rather of a sustained course of intentional activity that aims for one’s goal in a deliberate manner. Certain habits are therefore necessary for any possibility of a moral life.<sup>433</sup> This focus upon virtue is no mere transplant from ‘the Philosopher’; rather, it is a central tenet in his entire moral theory, acknowledging the means ‘by which we live righteously’ (I-II.55.4). However, while happiness for Aquinas ultimately resides within a beatitude that is promoted through supernatural virtue, his ethic is neither passive nor irrelevant. For Aquinas, virtue stops short of its goal if it fails to change our actions: ‘Virtue denotes a certain perfection of a power... But the end of power is act. Wherefore power is said to be perfect, according as it is determinate to its act’ (I-II.55.1). Aquinas’s moral theory

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<sup>433</sup> Porter, *Recovery*, 100.

thus avoids drawing a false dichotomy between virtues and rules, character and action.<sup>434</sup> Indeed, the beauty of Aquinas's formulation is that the immersion of both virtues and actions within an ethic of divine beatitude yields a morality that is undeniably positive.<sup>435</sup>

### 4.3.3 Thomistic Temperance

Contained in qq. 141-170 of the *Secunda Secundae*, Aquinas' discussion of temperance is a broadly Aristotelian treatment containing a variety of philosophical and theological sources. It considers the good and proper use of those objects perceived by the senses to be good – namely, the physical pleasures of food, drink, and sexual relations, which were the 'paradigm cases' of temperance.<sup>436</sup> It then expands upon Aristotle's categories to include related concerns, such as the habits associated with its proper exercise and its subspecies. These considerations arise from an understanding of two things: the nature of temperance as a virtue, and the standard or rule of temperance by which to measure appetitive excellence.

#### 4.3.3.1 Temperance as a Thomistic Virtue

For Aquinas, temperance draws from both Aristotelian *sōphrosynē* and Augustinian *temperantia*. Like the Greek *sōphrosynē*, temperance is a habit which seeks to locate itself in the mean between surfeit and deficiency; it is established in concert with *prudentia* and is reflected in both feeling and action (I-II.59.1). More specifically, it is concerned with the natural appetite for objects and experiences of the sensitive nature, particularly what promises or provides physical pleasure. Because those experiences

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<sup>434</sup> Porter, *Recovery*, 105.

<sup>435</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa: Background, Structure, & Reception* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 80.

<sup>436</sup> Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas* (London: Continuum, 2008), 169.

elicit a response from any feeling person (the lack of which would be the vice of insensibility), temperance is therefore to be 'well-moved' by those things which move us.<sup>437</sup> The subject of the virtue of temperance is the concupiscible appetite; following Aristotle, he limits its objects to the pleasures of touch (II-II.141.4 *sed*).<sup>438</sup>

Temperance also regulates desire for the good and pleasurable (II-II.141.3 *ad* 2). Pleasure is a good and proper accompaniment to the fully functioning human life (II-II.142.1); however, it is only proper if it is felt in a distinctively human way, and not as mere animals (II-II.142.4). Temperance is concerned with the pleasure experienced in both the anticipation and attainment of pleasurable things (I-II.32.3). If guided by temperance, this pleasure will be associated with the proper, distinctively human functioning of the appetite (I-II.32.1, II-II.142.1). This is qualitatively different than the manner in which animals experience pleasure (II-II.142.4), as humans are led by reason, infused by the theological virtues (II-II.141.3 *ad* 2). Temperance conveys beauty by constraining the lower parts of our nature, and by holding all things in their fitting proportions (II-II.141.3 *ad* 3).

#### **4.3.3.2 The Mode and Rule of Temperance**

Aquinas isolates three particular characteristics of temperance: attention to vital needs, restraint of physical appetites, and tranquility of soul. Each of these emphases highlights one aspect of the particular function of temperance: conformity to the natural rule of life, discipline of the irrational appetite, and expression of the beauty that is attendant to virtue.

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<sup>437</sup> Cates, 322.

<sup>438</sup> See *Eth.Nic.* 1118a30 and 3.1.3.1 (A) above.

### A) Attention to Vital Needs

The first characteristic of temperance is attention to vital needs: ‘This is what temperance adopts as its guiding rule in its use of things that give us pleasure, in others words it applies itself to them so far as our vital needs require them’ (II-II.141.6).<sup>439</sup> Aquinas maintains that the objects of temperance are ‘profoundly natural to us’ (II-II.141.7) and ‘essential to human life’ (II-II.141.2 *ad* 2). There are two ways to consider ‘vital needs.’ First, biological necessity will dictate what is minimally required for physical life, ‘those things without which we simply cannot survive, such as food for an animal’ (II-II.141.6 *ad* 2). However, temperance is rightly concerned with more than ‘purely physical requirements’ (II-II.141.6 *ad* 3). Aquinas now makes allowance for ‘something without which a thing cannot be becomingly’ (II-II.141.6 *ad* 2). This is determined with ‘moderation’ and ‘with due regard to place, time, and the good manners expected in living together’ (141.6 *ad* 2). Moreover, as an acceptance of social convention, it indirectly echoes the Stoic doctrine of *decorum*.<sup>440</sup> This connection is strengthened by Aquinas’s inclusion of official duties and a concern for honor within the criteria for ‘being becomingly’ (II-II.141.6 *ad* 3), categories that clearly exceed the physical domain.

By acknowledging the particularly human need for ‘being becomingly’, Aquinas expands upon the traditional understanding of the ‘needs of this life’ as it was understood within moral theology; for although Augustine sanctions the use of worldly things ‘so far as they are requisite for the needs of this life and of his station’ (141.6 *sed*), Aquinas takes this concession to social need and expands it into an

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<sup>439</sup> This statement immediately follows a reference in the *sed contra* to Augustine on vital needs (*mor.* 21.39).

<sup>440</sup> Austin argues that Aquinas is working to bridge the divide between Aristotle’s acceptance of ‘harmless superfluities’ and Augustine’s strict doctrine of ‘the needs of this life’ (226-32). I personally think that Augustine’s inclusion of the needs of one’s ‘station’ (*mor.* 21, cited in II-II.141.6 *sed*) bridges the divide considerably, but Austin’s point is still quite insightful.

approval (moderate, to be sure) of purely social concerns. Vital needs, for Aquinas, are clearly more than purely physical; they are social and emotional as well. This is in keeping with the *summum bonum* of human life; whereas vital needs are ‘the end which measures the execution of a temperate action ...the end which measures being temperate itself is happiness’ (II-II.141.6 *ad* 1).

Aquinas thus makes a nuanced point about this relationship: on the one hand, temperance must allow for what he calls ‘the burden of human nature’ (II-II.141.1 *ad* 1). On the other hand, temperance ‘is against the grain for merely animal nature uncomplying with reason’ (II-II.141.1 *ad* 1). Temperance plays a special role in the lives of humans, as they, unlike other animals, stand in need of some external regulation upon their desires in determining the true extent of vital needs (II-II.141 *ad* 6). That is, appetitive morality is found in the using of food, drink and sex in such a way that contributes to the well-being of individual persons and the human community as a whole. Human animality must be acknowledged and accommodated while simultaneously maintaining its distinction as ‘human’: it must not undermine general physical health; it is in proper relation to one’s context and peers, under the guidance of prudence; and it is secondary to the common good. However, the nature of the concupiscible appetite can make this difficult, which necessitates another function for temperance.

## **B) Restraint of Carnal Appetites**

The second characteristic of temperance is restraint of physical appetites: ‘It belongs to temperance, properly speaking, to restrain man from evil pleasures for the sake of the good appointed by reason’ (I-II.68.4 *ad* 1). Temperance ‘withdraws man from things which seduce the appetite from obeying reason’ (II-II.141.2); it ‘moderates’

and ‘restrains’ the physical appetites (II-II.143), particularly the ‘most vehement concupiscences of the pleasures of touch’ (II-II.157.3). This restraint arises from ‘the fear of the Lord’, albeit a ‘healthy fear’ that Aquinas recognizes as one of the gifts of the Spirit (II-II.141.1 *ad* 3).<sup>441</sup> This restraint is often described in equestrian terms: temperance will ‘bridle the pleasures which are too alluring to the soul’ (II-II.146.1 *ad* 3), and concupiscence, ‘like a child, needs curbing’ (II-II.151.1; cf. II-II.155.2 *ad* 1).<sup>442</sup> The importance of temperance as restraint stems precisely from its dealing with the pleasures and objects that are both natural and necessary, ‘so that it is more difficult to abstain from them, and to control the desire for them’ (II-II.141.7). This demonstrates the particularly challenging role given to temperance, as its sphere is precisely where is both ‘best and most difficult to contain oneself’ (II-II.155.2 *ad* 1). The restraint effected by temperance is both the most demanding and the most necessary of all the actions of the moral virtues.

Among the characteristics of Thomistic temperance, restraint is certainly the most common, with temperance being ‘commended for a kind of deficiency, from which all its parts are denominated’ (II-II.146.1 *ad* 3). Indeed, some of the species of temperance are named for their restrictive actions, as when ‘chastity takes its name from the fact that reason “chastises” concupiscence’ (II-II.151.1).<sup>443</sup> Nicholas Austin, in his monograph on the causes of Thomistic temperance, notes Aquinas’ tendency to (at least partially) derive the mode of a virtue from its names. However, he calls this tendency ‘problematic’ for three reasons: temperance may be ‘badly named’; the method does not always hold true, as in his example of studiousness; and regarding temperance, the etymology itself is superficial.<sup>444</sup> Thus, while Austin calls restraint ‘a

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<sup>441</sup> Also see I-II.68.4 *ad* 1.

<sup>442</sup> The terms ‘bridle’ and ‘curb’ also appear in the works of John Calvin; see 5.2.2.3 below.

<sup>443</sup> From the ‘chastening of concupiscence’ Aquinas derives ‘chastity’ (II-II.151.1).

<sup>444</sup> Austin, 69-70. On temperance being badly named, see North, 267, and 3.2.5.3 above.



“shorthand” definition of the mode of temperance’, he qualifies this restraint as ‘positive, non-repressive, and non-agonistic.’<sup>445</sup> He argues for the continued inclusion of restraint in the concept of temperance, but emphasizes the teleological, cooperative nature of this restraint, which rules rather than represses and serves an end larger than itself.<sup>446</sup> Temperance does not promote Stoic *apatheia*, but the ordering of passions to their rational end (I-II.34.1 *ad* 2; I-II.61.2). Similarly, in his classic *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Josef Pieper rejects ‘moderation’ as the definition of Thomistic temperance, as it is ‘too negative in its implication.’<sup>447</sup> Moreover, the pleasure of desiring and attaining something pleasing will be increased by the honor and beauty attendant on the practice of temperance.<sup>448</sup> Thus, balancing this emphasis is the third characteristic of temperance, beauty and tranquility of soul.

### **C) Beauty and Tranquility of Soul**

Temperance results in beauty in two ways: it brings the agent into ‘a certain moderate and fitting proportion’, and it prevents the ugliness of defilement that occurs whenever the animal nature is allowed to rule (II-II.141.2 *ad* 3; cf. II-II.141.8 *ad* 1). This beauty coincides with the pleasurable use of sensible goods, ‘as the sensible objects of the other senses are pleasant on account of their becomingness’ (II-II.141.4 *ad* 3). Tranquility of soul, which ‘though a general feature of every virtue, is especially prominent in temperance,’ is related to temperance in a similar manner; it both preserves beauty against the ugliness of defilement and preserves tranquility of soul against the disturbances of carnal desire (II-II.141.2 *ad* 2).<sup>449</sup> This is similar to the function of ‘saving *phronēsis*’ assigned to temperance by Aristotle (*Eth.Nic.IV.3*),

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<sup>445</sup> Austin, 67. He later calls the mode of temperance ‘a retraction from attraction’ (74).

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-81.

<sup>447</sup> Pieper, 146.

<sup>448</sup> Cates, 327.

<sup>449</sup> Aquinas follows Ambrose here (II-II.141.2 *obj* 2).

but with added positive content; for Aquinas, the temperate soul is not merely wise – it is beautiful.

This function of Thomistic temperance, which Aquinas himself mentions almost as an aside, is often overlooked. However, it is an especially compelling aspect of the virtue, called by Ambrose ‘what we observe and seek most in temperance’ (*de off.* I.42). Thus, while this understanding of beauty and tranquility can appear somewhat negative, due to its derivation from the avoidance of defilement, it is actually the fullness of the end towards which humanity is directed. Pieper characterizes this particular function as ‘selfless self-preservation’ and calls it ‘the seal and fruit of order.’<sup>450</sup> Beauty and tranquility serve as positive referents for the virtue of temperance, a healthy *telos* guiding the virtuous agent. Moreover, they work alongside restraint (which is largely negative) and attention to vital needs (which is largely neutral) to yield a well-rounded and holistic virtue.

#### **4.3.3.3 The Specifics of Temperance – Integral, Subjective, and Potential Parts**

Like all cardinal virtues, temperance is comprised of integral, subjective, and potential parts (II-II.143.1).<sup>451</sup> While concerned specifically with food, drink and sexual relations, temperance contains other elements that give the virtue fuller meaning and broader scope. Its ‘integral’ parts, components without which the virtue could not function properly, are shame and honesty. Shame is ‘a praiseworthy passion’ but ‘falls short of the perfection of virtue’; it indicates fear at committing a disgraceful act (II-II.144.1). Honesty, says Aquinas, is a kind of spiritual beauty: ‘Now the disgraceful is opposed to the beautiful: and opposites are most manifest of one another. Wherefore seemingly honesty belongs especially to temperance, since the

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<sup>450</sup> Pieper, 147.

<sup>451</sup> See II-II.48.

latter repels that which is most disgraceful and unbecoming to man, namely animal lusts' (II-II.145.4). Honesty enables human to see themselves, their appetites, and their situations with clarity, which is connected to beauty.

Aquinas follows Aristotle in naming the subjective parts or 'species' of temperance as food, drink and sex. Temperance related to food is called abstinence, which indicates proper use instead of mere detachment, and seeks to observe the mean. Abstinence is contrasted with gluttony, an 'inordinate desire for eating and drinking' that may be manifested in excess of quantity, inappropriate delicacy or cost, or exhibiting too much enjoyment in the meal itself (II-II.148.4 *obj* 1). In addressing food at the start, Aquinas notes the problematic nature of its temperate use. One cannot simply abstain from food indefinitely; its proper enjoyment is essential to life. This can be difficult, as 'pleasures of the table are of a nature to withdraw man from the good of reason, both because they are so great, and because food is necessary to man who needs it for the maintenance of life, which he desires above all other things' (II-II.146.2). Sobriety is the temperate use of alcohol. It is contrasted with drunkenness, which Aquinas regards most seriously, as it can create serious problems on our moral formation by becoming 'a hindrance to the use of reason' (II-II.149.2). Drinking is not altogether vicious, but can become so very easily.

Sexual relations are governed by the virtues of chastity and purity and stand in contrast to the vice of lust. Chastity is concerned with sexual acts themselves and 'takes its name from the fact that reason "chastises" concupiscence, which, like a child, needs curbing' (II-II.151.1). Purity, or virginity, addresses the outward indications of sexual interest. Aquinas cites Augustine (*civ.* 1.18) in saying that 'virginity is continence whereby integrity of the flesh is vowed, consecrated and observed in honor of the Creator' (II-II.152.1). While chastity is expected of

everyone, virginity is a special calling and applies less broadly. These virtues are contrasted with lust, which exists whenever a sexual act is performed that is against nature, morals, or a commandment (II-II.153.1). Aquinas situates all temperate sexual activity within the realm of a stable Christian marriage that is open to and aiming towards procreation; without this intention, the sexual act is rooted exclusively in the pleasures of the flesh and thus becomes lust (II-II.154).

#### **4.3.4 The Potential Parts of Temperance**

The potential parts of temperance are the secondary virtues which moderate and patrol the desires for less dominant pleasures. They include continence, which restrains the will as swayed by passion; clemency, which moderates external punishment; meekness, which moderates the desire for revenge; modesty, which manages the external actions of the body so as not to inflame lust; humility, which moderates the movements of pride, and studiousness, which is concerned with desiring and acquiring knowledge in an appropriate manner. This study will examine two of these in greater detail: continence and humility.

##### **4.3.4.1 Continence**

Aquinas begins by acknowledging the dual understanding of continence he has inherited. Drawing from Galatians 5, he first notes that continence can be appended to charity and denote complete abstinence from sexual activity, wherein virginity becomes ‘perfect continence’ (II-II.155.1). Drawing next from Aristotle (*Eth.Nic.* VII.7) and the Conference of the Fathers (xii.10), continence is merely ‘resistance of evil desires’; in this understanding, continence is a virtue ‘in the broad sense’ and differs from temperance ‘just as imperfect differs from perfect’ (II-II.155.4; cf. II-

II.143 *ad* 1).<sup>452</sup> Like Aristotle, Aquinas identifies the ‘perfect’ virtue of temperance with reduced or eliminated reliance upon self-control (II-II.155.1). Thus, continence, which ‘denotes curbing’ (II-II.155.2), is an ‘imperfect’ virtue, as ‘the good of reason flourishes more in the temperate man than in the continent man’ (II-II.155.4). The continent person strives more than the temperate person (II-II.155.4 *obj* 2); and whereas temperance moderates, continence merely restrains (II-II.155.3 *ad* 1). It therefore does not remove the evil desires of the concupiscible appetite, as it is actually located in the will and not in the concupiscible appetite (II-II.155.3 *sed*; cf. *Eth.Nic.* VII.9; I-II.13.1). Continence ‘restrains the movement of the will when stirred by the impulse of passion’ (II-II.143); thus, while continence is connected to temperance because of a similarity of mode (the mode of restraint), it is closer to fortitude in similarity of subject (the subject being the will).<sup>453</sup>

Aquinas’ comments on incontinence shed additional light on his moral typology. Incontinence is sin because it ‘fails to observe the mode of reason’ (II-II.156.2). Yet their sin is exceeded by the intemperate; while the incontinent is ignorant of some particular aspect of their choice, the intemperate is ignorant of their true and final end (II-II.156.3 *ad* 1; cf. *Eth.Nic.* VII.7,8). Moreover, unlike the incontinent, the intemperate is unrepentant and ‘rejoices in having sinned, because the sinful act has become connatural to him by reason of his habit’ (II-II.156.3). Therefore, because ‘impenitence aggravates every sin,’ the intemperate person sins more gravely than the incontinent (II-II.156.3 *sed*). Thus, the incontinent is ‘less comfortable, but more easily reformable.’<sup>454</sup> However, more knowledge will deliver

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<sup>452</sup> Here Aquinas follows Aristotle rather than Augustine, as Augustine discusses continence in a much broader, more comprehensive manner; see 4.2.4 above.

<sup>453</sup> In fact, Curzer, *Virtues*, makes that connection in his chapter ‘Courage and Continence’ (19-64).

<sup>454</sup> Porter, *Recovery*, 115.

neither the incontinent nor the intemperate from their vicious state; they both require ‘the inward assistance of grace which quenches concupiscence (II-II.156.3 *ad* 2).

In his characterization of continence, Aquinas follows Aristotle almost exclusively; surprisingly, he fails to mention Augustine even in his references to the practice of sexual continence (II-II.155.1). Likewise, he makes no reference at all to Augustine’s larger category of continence as healing or conversion (whether from ignorance or choice it is difficult to say). For continence, Aquinas adheres closely to the Aristotelian framework on this matter. This he will not do in his treatment of humility.

#### **4.3.4.2 Humility**

Aquinas’ treatment of humility, wherein he places humility and magnanimity alongside one another as a pair of virtues guiding the moral agent in the proper use of hope, highlights the inherent difficulties of attempting to synthesize Aristotelian and Augustinian moral frameworks.<sup>455</sup> Aquinas first defines humility as ‘the notion of a praiseworthy self-abasement to the lowest place’ (II-II.161.1 *ad* 2). This self-abasement is not for its own sake, but is teleologically oriented in ‘the subjection of man to God, for whose sake he humbles himself by subjecting himself to others’ (II-II.161.1 *ad* 5). Humility expresses the ‘intrinsic principle’ of humanity’s relationship to God, ‘when a man, considering his own failings, assumes the lowest place according to his mode’ (II-II.161.1 *ad* 2).<sup>456</sup> It arises from ‘divine reverence, which shows that man ought not to ascribe to himself more than is competent to him according to the position in which God has placed him’ (II-II.161.2 *ad* 3).

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<sup>455</sup> For recent treatments on humility in the thought of Aquinas, see Lisa Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility: A Thomistic Apologetic* (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009) and Tadie, ‘Between Humilities.’

<sup>456</sup> Here he continues, ‘Thus Abraham said to the Lord (Genesis 18:27), “I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes”’ (II-II.161.1 *ad* 2).

Aquinas' second conception of humility is as a meta-virtue, preparing the soil for the cultivation of other virtues. Humility 'makes a man a good subject to ordinance of all kinds and in all matters' (II-II.161.5). It is the 'first step in the acquisition of virtue... inasmuch as it expels pride... and makes man submissive and ever open to the receive the influx of Divine grace' (II-II.161.5). Humility duly orders the multiplicity of human goods, as it 'especially removes the obstacle to man's spiritual welfare consisting in man's aiming at heavenly and spiritual things, in which he is hindered by striving to become great in earthly things' (II-II.161.5 *ad* 4). In this, Christ is the divine exemplar:

Hence our Lord, in order to remove an obstacle to our spiritual welfare, showed by giving an example of humility, that outward exaltation is to be despised. Thus humility is, as it were, a disposition to man's untrammelled access to spiritual and divine goods. (II-II.161.5 *ad* 4)

Humility, like the other moral virtues, can be both acquired and infused: 'Man arrives at humility in two ways. First and chiefly by a gift of grace, and in this way the inner man precedes the outward man. The other way is by human effort, whereby he first of all restrains the outward man, and afterwards succeeds in plucking out the inward root' (II-II.161.6 *ad* 2). Humility is, in a way, curiously placed underneath temperance. Although it could be subordinated to courage, as the subject of humility is 'the movement of the mind towards hope,' Aquinas joins it to temperance, the mode and function of humility is 'to temper and restrain the mind, lest it tend to high things immoderately' (II-II.161.1).<sup>457</sup> Thus humility, like continence, is connected to the irascible appetite through its subject and to the concupiscible appetite through its mode (II-II.161.4 *ad* 2).

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<sup>457</sup> 'Now the mode of temperance, whence it chiefly derives its praise, is the restraint or suppression of the impetuosity of a passion' (II-II.161.4; cf. II-II.137.2, *ad* 1; II-II.157.3 *ad* 2).

Thomistic humility is related to several classical themes, including self-knowledge and due proportion: ‘For this purpose he must know his disproportion to that which surpasses his capacity. Hence knowledge of one’s own deficiency belongs to humility, as a rule guiding the appetite’ (II-II.161.2). Aquinas cautions ‘due moderation’ in the practice of humility to avoid causing spiritual harm in others (II-II.161.3 *ad* 3). Like all things, humility needs to observe right reason; humanity is still above the ‘senseless beasts’; to compare ourselves to them, and to become like them, takes humility beyond its proper mode (II-II.161.1 *ad* 2). This precedes a citation from Origen wherein ‘that humility which God regards is the same as what they [the philosophers] called *metriotēs*, i.e. measure or moderation’ (II-II.161.4 *sed*). Thus, Thomistic humility is a mean in the classical sense, unlike the Augustinian understanding of humility as the ‘first, second, and third’ way to truth.<sup>458</sup>

As stated earlier, Aquinas’ treatment of humility is a distinct departure from his broadly Aristotelian framework. In his task of incorporating both Aristotelian and Christian virtue, he boldly yokes humility to its Aristotelian ‘opposite’, magnanimity, as both seek to direct the urge to greatness in accord with right reason: ‘Humility restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason: while magnanimity urges the mind to great things in accord with right reason. Hence it is clear that magnanimity is not opposed to humility: indeed they concur in this, that each is according to right reason’ (II-II.161.1 *ad* 3).<sup>459</sup> For Aristotle, magnanimity is the ‘crown’ of the virtuous life, earned (and expected) by the truly honorable, truly virtuous person. Pusillanimity (*mikropsychia*, more accurately ‘small-souledness’) is the vice of defect in the triad concerned with proper honor. However, Aquinas explicitly contrasts humility with pusillanimity (II-II.162.1 *ad* 3). Furthermore, he

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<sup>458</sup> *Ep.* 118.22; see 4.2.2.3 above.

<sup>459</sup> *Eth.Nic.* IV.3; 3.1.3.2 (B), above.



draws an explicit connection between humility and temperance from an unlikely source, the Philosopher himself, who notes the use of *sōphron* in the discussion of magnanimity: ‘A man who aims at small things in proportion to his mode is not magnanimous but “temperate,” and such a man we may call humble’ (II-II.161.4).<sup>460</sup>

Instead of the vice contrasted to magnanimity, humility is the virtue contrasted to pride. For Aquinas, pride (*superbia*) denotes someone aiming higher (*supra*) than they should, in a way that exceeds the proportion determined by right reason (II-II.162.1). Pride is the ‘inordinate imitation of God’ (referencing *ciu.* 14.13, 19.12), and it is directly opposed to humility because it ‘scorns subjection’ (II-II.162.1 *ad* 3). Pride is opposed to all virtues (II-II.162.2 *obj* 2) in a manner similar to the way humility underlies all the virtues (II-II.161.5). Thus, Aquinas’ treatment of humility is surprisingly brief, since pride may be considered the ‘most grievous of sins’ (II-II.162.6 *obj* 2). Thus, for Aquinas, humility is not the quasi-vice of Aristotle; in fact, it is explicitly contrasted to pusillanimity. Neither is it the foundational meta-virtue of Augustine, although it does retain something of its status as an essential virtue.

#### 4.3.5 Particularities of Thomistic Temperance

Several points are of particular interest in the Thomistic account of temperance. First, when asking if ‘present life needs’ should be the yardstick for the virtue, Aquinas states, ‘This is what temperance adopts as its guiding rule in the use of things that give us pleasure, in other words it applies itself to them so far as our vital needs require them’ (II-II.141.6). That is, the measure for temperance is intimately connected with the embodied needs of physical human bodies. Holding this view in

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<sup>460</sup> In his commentary on the *Eth.Nic.*, Aquinas qualifies this use of temperance ‘in the sense that temperance is taken for any moderation whatsoever’ (*Commentary*, 237 [¶738]).

tension with his distinction between natural and final ends (I-II.1.8) could prove useful in negotiating the numerous consumption choices of modern culture.

However, it is now generally accepted that distorted human longing for the good goes beyond the objects of food, drink, and sex.<sup>461</sup> Acquisitiveness runs rampant in modern culture; issues such as materialism and conspicuous consumption, planned obsolescence, debt schemes, convenience packaging of food, media and Internet addictions, and a surfeit of stimulation might, to their benefit, all come under the purview of temperance. Aquinas also notes that temperance ‘scorns bodily allurements and popular praise’ (141.4.*obj* 1). Although he qualifies this statement by restricting the ‘special virtue’ of temperance to ‘its own determinate subject matter’, he does acknowledge that the task of temperance is ‘to maintain due measure in our desire, chiefly and properly in those for pleasures of touch, secondarily in others’ (II-II.141.4 *ad* 1). Thus, temperance plays a primary role in the regulation of all human desires. Another persuasive argument for an expansion of scope is that temperance addresses things ‘beyond purely physical requirements and extend to the befitting ownership of external things, thus wealth and a dignified profession’, wherein Aquinas connects temperance to ‘the responsibilities as well as to the necessities of life’ (II-II.141.6.*ad* 3).

Second, Aquinas often gives the impression that, for him, temperance involves more active self-control than established self-order, feeling ashamed rather than feeling peaceful.<sup>462</sup> This is particularly evident in a modification of a quote from Ambrose in II-II.155: when discussing the relationship of continence to pleasures of touch, Aquinas substitutes *continentem* (‘continent’) for *concontinentem* (‘harmonious’) (II-II.155.2 *obj* 1). The original quote is an observance on *decorum*, which ‘has a

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<sup>461</sup> For a discussion of the scope of temperance, see Austin, 84-105, and 6.3.2.3 below.

<sup>462</sup> Cates, 322-3.

consistent form and the perfection of what is virtuous harmonizing (*concinentem*) in every action' (*de off.* I.46). Aquinas seems to believe that *decorum* lies within restraint and not harmony, a significant (and, I will argue, unhelpful) development for the virtue of temperance.

Some recent commentators have questioned this understanding. Unlike the conflation present in Augustine, temperance and continence are established as related yet qualitatively different virtues, with the conscious (and constant) application of self-control being the major distinguishing factor. Following Aristotle, his distinction between temperance and continence indicates that temperance is not a habit of constant inner struggle. In short, temperance is not primarily a defensive habit; that would be confusing it with continence. Moreover, this distinction of temperance and continence reveals the association of true temperance with an ease of body and serenity of spirit, the aspect of 'being well-moved.' Because this gloss runs counter to its puritanical connotations, it holds promise for a more positive retrieval of the virtue.<sup>463</sup> Our responses to our sense appetites are to be beautiful, 'moderate and fitting' (II-II.141.2, ad 3), with a wholesome delight in the object of our pleasure. Simon Harak employs a lovely illustration of a woman enjoying a vine ripened tomato, reveling in the goodness of it and reflecting on the bounty of the Lord's provision. The pleasure she receives in eating the tomato fulfills all the criteria of a joyful, yet temperate and wholly appropriate response.<sup>464</sup> Third, temperate responses are tranquil, reflecting the serenity of the soul from which they spring (II-II.141.2). Temperance 'gives us inner rest and opens the mind for higher values' (141.2). The lack of straining and striving reveals an inner order and settled nature which can only come from true virtue.

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<sup>463</sup> Cates, 323-4; Austin, 76-83.

<sup>464</sup> G. Simon Harak, *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 94.

#### 4.3.6 Conclusions on Thomistic Temperance

Aquinas has an interesting, somewhat equivocating relationship with the virtue of temperance, particularly when read alongside the account from Augustine. On the one hand, Aquinas locates temperance, via humility, against the vice of pride, which is the most serious of vices. He emphasizes the difficult nature of its task, due to its restraining the hardest and lowest of the passions. However, it is considered less important than those virtues which affect society as a whole: ‘The greatest virtues are those which are most profitable to others... whereas temperance moderates only the desires and pleasures which affect man himself’ (II-II.41.8). There is an expansion of its sphere, although not as Augustine does; it is not broadly operative like Augustine’s continence, but its sphere does include all of life in its connection with modesty (this follows its Latin translation from the Fathers and Cicero), and through modesty includes humility, studiousness, meekness, and clemency. Strong things need to be tempered, but all things need to be moderated (II-II.160.1 ad.2). Yet despite his broadly Aristotelian framework, Aquinas chooses to reinstate the tetrad of cardinal virtues, which grants temperance a priority found in Plato, the Stoics, and Augustine, but not Aristotle. While somewhat reduced, temperance is still a cardinal virtue. Moreover, temperance is not a purely ‘negative’ virtue, as Aquinas follows Aristotle in associating temperance with beautiful and pleasing movements of appetite.

Aquinas and Augustine display several key differences in the way they appropriate the tradition they have received. First is the nature of the relationship between Christ and truth. For Aquinas, Christ is utterly compatible with truth; therefore, the wisdom of Aristotle is fulfilled by the revelation of scripture. For Augustine, Christ *is* truth, an essential part of any real understanding of reality. Second and similarly, they view the nature of love quite differently. Despite his

extensive use of *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* in his discussion of temperance, Aquinas makes no mention of its groundbreaking definition of virtue as perfect and ordered love of God. Aquinas has love in a different category; for him, love is grounded in the being of God. Aquinas' treatment of love exhibits the *exitus-reditus* structure of his moral thought: God is himself love (I.20.1 *sed*, citing Jn 4.16). Love is thus the primary act of the will; it 'regards the good universally, whether possessed or not' (I.20.1 *resp*). God is, moreover, the cause of all human love, and love is the cause of all other passions (I-II.25.3). While Aquinas does reference Augustine's definition of virtue as forms of 'ordered love' (I-II.62.2 *obj* 3, citing *mor.* 15), he stresses the difference between the moral and theological virtues, maintaining that the moral virtues *arise from* love but are not themselves *forms* of love (I-II.62.2 *ad* 3).<sup>465</sup> Third is the relationship between grace and nature. For Augustine, the question is how fallen (and sinful) humanity lives in fallen creation, battling against the city of men; the answer is that divine grace overcomes human nature. For Aquinas, the question is how natural (yet resurrected) humanity lives, both naturally and by grace, within and as part of God's creation; the answer is that grace perfects human nature. For temperance, the virtue most closely associated with natural appetites, the choice of perfection instead of overcoming takes on special meaning.

Additionally, their theological differences may be partially due to differences in their personalities and temperaments. Augustine and Aquinas certainly experienced quite different internal struggles with 'the lusts of the flesh'. These differences are often revealed in Aquinas' tendency, arising from his personal preference for agreement over dispute, to criticize through silence and selection rather than rhetoric (another departure from Augustine). For instance, Aquinas's explicit return to the

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<sup>465</sup> 'If, however, it be understood of the love of charity, it does not mean that every other virtue is charity essentially: but that all other virtues depend on charity in some way' (I-II.62.2 *ad* 3).

classical, Aristotelian separation of temperance and continence may be his commitment to Aristotle's classical categories. However, it may also be an implicit rebuke of Augustine for his obsession with sexual desire and subsequent conflation of temperance and continence.<sup>466</sup> It is curious that Augustine's treatise *On Continence* receives no mention in Aquinas' entire treatment of temperance and continence. Continence is simply not an operative category for Aquinas, but a classically understood sub-virtue.

Overall, Aquinas' treatment of temperance is positive, life-affirming, and realistic. Rooted in grace and in the nature of God who desires to draw all things back to himself, the Christian moral life is not fully destroyed by the power of sin.

In dealing with the cardinal virtues in particular, the Middle Ages established confidence in the human attempt to reach moral goodness under divine guidance – not by denying the cumbersome aspects of the human condition, but by offering a virtuous way out. The idea that the human self can be brought to moral perfection through the combined efforts of man and his Creator is a medieval legacy.<sup>467</sup>

Aquinas gave the Christian tradition a document that still forms the bedrock of a significant portion of its moral thought. The endurance of the *Summa* ensures several things: the reinstatement of Aristotle in moral theology, the conveyance of the tetrad of cardinal virtues, and the legacy of theological eudaimonism.

#### **4.4 Conclusions on Patristic and Medieval Temperance**

This discussion has been framed by a central question: To what extent does the Christian context make a fundamental difference to the moral conversation? The appearance of Christ changes the conversation in several ways. First, the nature of the human *telos* has changed – instead of a purely natural end, humanity is now

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<sup>466</sup> I am grateful to Robert Song for posing this question to me.

<sup>467</sup> Bejczy, 289.

supernaturally oriented towards heaven and the contemplation of the divine presence. Second, humanity now follows a completely different moral exemplar; the grandiosity of the *megalopsychoi* has been replaced by the humility of the kenotic Christ. The ancient admonition to ‘remember your mortality, remember you are not God’ takes on an entirely new meaning in light of Christ’s self-emptying in Philippians 2. Third, the cardinal virtues are transcended by the theological virtues; love, rather than wisdom (whether theoretical or practical) is now the architectonic virtue. Finally, the shift in moral categories from *vice* to *sin* fundamentally altered the virtue conversation – love may be architectonic, but human sinfulness limits the degree to which virtue may actually be realized.

Where the vocabulary and systems do display continuity from the classical period, they have often received new origins and new consummations. The development of temperance reflects these fundamental changes. Temperance does retain some of its classical sense, particularly its function in restraining the appetites; however, it effectively loses its connection to sound-mindedness. Moreover, temperance is also understood as purity, an outward effect of the inner sanctification of the believer. In a sense, it is the essential Christian virtue, particularly in its manifestations as chastity. Continence also assumes a large role, mostly as sexual renunciation that buttresses this understanding of temperance, but also as a *modus operandi* for the indwelling love of God in the Christian life. Gone is the classical distinction between the internal ‘ease’ of temperance and the internal ‘struggle’ of continence, although Augustine and Aquinas differ in their views on the possibility of true temperance in this sinful life. Gone also is the understanding of temperance as the preservation of rationality and wisdom in matters of choice. Its connections with order and harmony have shifted into calls to holiness and purity.

Like Plato, and rather unlike Aristotle, Augustine resonates with the virtues of temperance and continence in a deeply personal way. In a discussion of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians, he declares: ‘Among the goods of which God made mention, he set Continence in the last place, and he willed that it should in an especial manner cleave to our minds’ (*cont.* 9). His concluding sentence in *De Moribus* underscores his view of the importance of the topic, that ‘these remarks on temperance are few in proportion to the greatness of the theme’ (*mor.* 21.39). Augustinian temperance and continence are neither a wholesale rejection of desire and *cupiditas* nor a rote continuation of a classical virtue; they are calls to conversion, means of grace in the midst of fallenness, and helpmeets on the journey towards sanctification and humanity’s ultimate happiness in God. Aquinas, conversely, views temperance as a necessary but lesser virtue, required for the proper functioning of reason. Temperance does retain its cardinal status but is not as laudable as such ‘outward’ virtues as justice or courage. In a culmination of sorts, temperance is explicitly associated with humility as it is set against the most grievous of vices, pride. Thus, temperance leaves the medieval period with both classical and Christian content – still regarded as a cardinal virtue, yet the only one that is simultaneously a fruit of the Spirit. This double birthright accompanies temperance to the next chapter of Christian moral thought –that of the Protestant Reformation, with an altered approach to moral discourse and an ambivalent and unstable relationship to virtue.



## Chapter Five

### **Virtue During and After the Reformation: Temperance in Calvin and Wesley**

Augustine and Aquinas both contributed to the transmission of virtue in general, and temperance in particular, in the Christian tradition. In their different ways, they maintained an explicit conversation between the classical idea of virtue and the particularities of Christian moral theology. However, the Reformation decidedly changed the relationship between the Christian tradition and virtue, in both its philosophical and theological forms. Chapter Five considers two different positions within this relationship: John Calvin, working during the formative days of the Reformation, and John Wesley, operating after the Reformation was firmly established.

#### **5.1 Virtue Ethics and the Reformation**

As stated, the church fathers and the scholastics preserved the institution of virtue thought within Christianity, notably the Catholic Church. However, the Reformation expressly critiqued many aspects of Catholicism: its soteriology and ecclesiology; the perceived conflict between justification and religious works; and the translation of the Bible from the Latin. One significant development for moral theology was the change in posture towards virtue and beatitude, which varied among theologians but always differed considerably from the Catholic position.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> My understanding of Luther in this section was shaped by Bernd Wannewetsch, 'Luther's Moral Theology', and Markus Wriedt, 'Luther's Theology', trans. Katharina Gustavs, both in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) (120-35 and 86-119 respectively). On his intersections with virtue more specifically, Jennifer Herdt is informative (173-202).

### 5.1.1 Martin Luther and the ‘Honest Sinner’

Martin Luther was, like Augustine before him, less of a systematic theologian than a responder to situations, controversies, and conflicts.<sup>469</sup> The content of his ‘relational theology’ appears in the form of ‘paradox’, elucidated within the connection and tension between two opposing terms or concepts.<sup>470</sup> Against the medieval emphasis upon natural law, wherein the glory and mystery of God were fundamentally accessible to the believer who aspired to the beatitude of divine contemplation by participating in the natural moral order (*ST* I-II.3.1,8; I-II.5, a.7, ad.1), Luther proclaimed a strong Christology and the necessity of the Holy Spirit as the difference between ‘knowing there is a god’ and ‘knowing who God is’ (WA 19:207, 11; 1:362, 15, 21). Concerns about the emotional and works-oriented implications of ‘love’ resulted in his employing faith instead of love as a framing theological concept, as ‘faith’ expressed the radically gracious nature of Christ’s salvific work.<sup>471</sup>

Like his broader thought, Luther’s moral theology is characterized by a certain ‘resonance’ between different parts of his theological grammar.<sup>472</sup> Luther emphasized the moral centrality of the Decalogue, particularly the ‘First Commandment’, but he insisted upon a christological lens for its proper understanding; faith through Christ is the only way to fulfill this and every commandment.<sup>473</sup> Thus, Luther emphasized humanity’s absolute dependence upon God’s grace and utterly rejected any concept of virtue as *habitus*, which he believed inevitably resulted in the entrenchment of

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<sup>469</sup> Wriedt, 86-7.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>471</sup> Wannenwetsch notes that faith was a ‘somewhat pale concept in medieval Christianity’ (129).

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>473</sup> Wriedt, 121-3.

pride.<sup>474</sup> Humanity has no legitimate option but to acknowledge its complete dependence on God's grace, eschewing any claim to self-worth.

The whole exodus of the people of Israel formerly symbolized that exodus which they interpret as one from faults to virtues. But it would be better to understand it as an exodus from virtues to the grace of Christ, because virtues of that kind are often greater or worse faults the less they are accepted as such and the more powerfully they subordinate to themselves every human emotion at the expense of all other good qualities. (WA 56:158)

Even Luther's 'honest sinner' is preferable to Calvin's 'hypocritical doer of the Law' who 'seeks to obtain righteousness by a mechanical performance of good works' (*Comm.* Gal 3.10).<sup>475</sup> Interestingly, Luther saw a non-causal difference between being saved and being holy, insisting that 'even the godless may have much about them that is holy without thereby being saved' (WA 50:643). Thus, the only alternative to works righteousness is humbly allowing God to do what sinful humanity cannot: 'The highest and first work of God in us and the best training is that we let our own works go and let our reason and will lie dormant, resting and commending ourselves to God in all things' (WA 6:245). He also scorned what he viewed as the superficial and hypocritical nature of mimetic virtue, even when this was based upon the idea of Christ as moral exemplar.<sup>476</sup> This position assumes the ability to benefit from any exemplar, no matter how perfect, and Luther denies this as a possibility for fallen humanity. Rather, believers must 'marry' themselves to Christ, so that his righteousness is imputed to the 'honest' sinner.<sup>477</sup> This righteousness will manifest itself in what Luther called the *vita passiva*, or 'living a receptive life', in which all

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<sup>474</sup> Luther did allow for an Aristotelian form of civic virtue; see Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), 181.

<sup>475</sup> All '*Comm.*' citations are from John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* [1564] (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1948).

<sup>476</sup> Cf. Augustine, *mor.* 13.22.

<sup>477</sup> Interestingly, Augustine lies somewhat awkwardly in the middle of this conflict: while his concerns about the *superbia* of the pagans were foundational for the Lutheran rejection of traditional virtue, he also provided a substantial basis for the Thomistic formulation of virtue. See 4.2.3.3 above.

works are considered ‘good’ when performed in faith and within the perfect justification of Christ.<sup>478</sup>

Despite being instructed since childhood in both the doctrines and life of the Catholic Church and in the Humanist foundations of a liberal education, John Calvin consciously chose to align himself with the nascent theology and ecclesiology of the Reformation. Calvin agreed with Luther on the inclination of humanity towards pride and pretense: ‘For, since we are all naturally prone to hypocrisy, any empty semblance of righteousness is quite enough to satisfy us instead of righteousness itself’ (*Inst.* I.1.2, cf. II.1.1-2).<sup>479</sup> He also affirmed humanity’s utter reliance upon the grace of God: ‘remember that we have nothing of our own, but depend entirely on God, from whom we hold at pleasure whatever he has seen it meet to bestow’ (*Inst.* II.1.1). However, Calvin was more deeply concerned with sanctification and moral order than was Luther, as this would lead to the gradual alignment of the saints, and the world, with the will of God as revealed in the scriptures.<sup>480</sup> This concern resulted in an increased focus upon the topics of holiness and the exterior evidence of an interior faith (*Inst.* II.1.1).<sup>481</sup>

### 5.1.2 Calvin’s ‘Christian Philosophy’

Given his concern to separate himself from the problems of the Catholic Church, is there any element of teleological or virtue thinking in Calvin’s writings? Because he wrote while the Reformation was still somewhat fragile, he needed to distance himself from the theology of the Catholic Church, including its eudaimonism and virtue

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<sup>478</sup> Wannewetsch, 133.

<sup>479</sup> All citations from the *Institutes* are from John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge [1541] (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953).

<sup>480</sup> Herdt, 198.

<sup>481</sup> Harkness states, ‘With Luther the concept of love is the center of his idea of God; with Calvin, that of majesty’ (74).

theory. However, he retains some of its language and concepts; although he does not align the two in a classical manner, his language of sanctification contains small reminders of the discourse of virtue.

Calvin shared Augustine's skepticism of pagan virtue.<sup>482</sup> He disdained the 'frigid exhortations of the philosophers,' declaring that the gospel message 'ought to affect the whole man with a hundred times more energy' (*Inst.* III.6.4). Philosophers of old may have modeled virtue of a sort, but it is not to be confused with true godliness: 'There have often appeared in unrenewed men remarkable instances of [virtue], but it is certain that all were but specious disguises' (*Comm.* Gal. 5.23). Like Luther, Calvin worried that the classical and scholastic conception of virtue inevitably fosters pride and false confidence in human moral abilities. 'The philosophers who have contended most strongly that virtue is to be desired on her own account' he says, 'were so inflated with arrogance as to make it apparent that they sought virtue for no other reason than as a ground for indulging pride' (*Inst.* III.7.2).

In the place of pagan *superbia*, Calvin offered his idea of 'Christian philosophy,' which begins from an entirely different foundation:

This transformation (which Paul calls the renewing of the mind, Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23), though it is the first entrance to life, was unknown to all the philosophers. They give the government of man to reason alone, thinking that she alone is to be listened to; in short, they assign to her the sole direction of the conduct. But Christian philosophy bids her give place, and yield complete submission to the Holy Spirit, so that the man himself no longer lives, but Christ lives and reigns in him. (*Inst.* III.7.1)

When human reason and ability is submitted to the Spirit, it can function as an effective servant, rather than as a corrupt master. Calvin did not denigrate human reason *per se*, as it is a 'noble quality' and part of the inheritance of being created in the *imago Dei* (*Inst.* II.1.1). What Calvin called 'Christian philosophy' involves

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<sup>482</sup> See 4.2.3.3 above.

dethroning natural reason and submitting, instead, to the work of the Spirit in the ‘transformation and renewal of our minds’ (*Inst.* III.7.1). And while Calvin was not a full-fledged eudaemonist, he occasionally used the language of beatitude. ‘There is no man who would not be pleased with eternal blessedness’ he says, ‘and yet, without the impulse of the Spirit, no man would aspire to it’ (*Inst.* II.2.26). Again, this teleology arises from and is sustained by the Holy Spirit.

### 5.1.3 Calvin’s Complicated Virtue

Calvin’s use of the virtue paradigm is difficult to summarize. On the one hand, Calvin does not hesitate to employ the term ‘virtue’ throughout his works. Virtue, for Calvin, is nothing but the gift and grace of God, designed to help the believer to fulfill all godliness: ‘All virtues, all proper and well regulated affections proceed from the Spirit, that is, from the grace of God, and the renewed nature which we derive from Christ’ (*Comm.* Gal 5.23).<sup>483</sup> God ‘adorns us with virtue,’ which he equates with ‘good morals, wisdom, patience, and love’ (*Comm.* 2 Pet 1.4). These are faith’s ‘inseparable companions’ so that it will not be ‘naked or empty’; virtue is ‘a life honest and rightly formed’; knowledge is ‘what is needed for acting prudently’ (*Comm.* 2 Pet. 1.4). Virtue comes from God alone because only he possesses true virtue (*Inst.* I.1.1). Possession and presentation of these virtues indicate a genuine ‘knowledge of Christ’, and reveals His participation in the believer: ‘Then you will at length prove that Christ is really known by you, if ye be endued with virtue, temperance, and the other endowments. For the knowledge of Christ is an efficacious thing and a living root, which brings forth fruit’ (*Comm.* 2 Pet. 1.8). Moreover, it is

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<sup>483</sup> Considering the foundational role played by *moderatio* in his thinking, it is interesting that he does not explicate ‘temperance’ in verse 23.

the work of the Spirit as well, which ‘is the author of love, chastity, sobriety, modesty, peace, moderation, and truth’ (*Inst.* III.3.14).

However, like Augustine, Calvin never releases his concerns about pagan virtue. One passage highlights both Calvin’s expressed view of virtue and the problems inherent in any discussion of virtue: ‘I take virtue to mean a life honest and rightly formed; for it is not here *energeia*, energy or courage, but *aretē*, virtue, moral goodness’ (*Comm.* 2 Pet 1.7). Here, virtue contains several of its classical components, even beyond the use of the classical Greek *aretē*: it is not momentary but lifelong; it is formed, and formed honestly and ‘rightly’; it is moral; and it is good. However, he quickly distinguishes his position (or what he perceives to be Peter’s position) from the classical belief in the power of free will.

When, therefore, the Apostle requires these things, he by no means asserts that they are in our power, but only shews what we ought to have, and what ought to be done. And as to the godly, when conscious of their own infirmity, they find themselves deficient in their duty, nothing remains for them but to flee to God for aid and help. (*Comm.* 2 Pet 1.7)

This highlights a perennial issue for Calvin: the tension between the work of God and the will of man. Calvin explicitly denies that growth in virtue negates man’s utter dependence on God: ‘For it plainly testifies, that right feelings are formed in us by God, and are rendered by him effectual. It testifies also that all our progress and perseverance are from God. Besides, it expressly declares that wisdom, love, patience, are the gifts of God and the Spirit’ (*Inst.* III.6.2). The remedy was not to revel in human strength and striving, but to acknowledge our utter depravity and dependence on God. ‘For he who has learned to look to God in everything he does, is at the same time diverted from all vain thoughts. This is that self-denial which Christ so strongly enforces on his disciples from the very outset (Matt 16.24)’ (*Inst.* III.7.2).

He speaks more positively of the ‘much more beautiful arrangement’ in Scripture, ‘which is in every way much more certain than that of philosophers’ (*Inst.* III.6.1).

Nor does he consistently condemn pagan virtue: ‘Hence it follows, as we lately observed, that those virtues, or rather images of virtues, of whatever kind, are divine gifts, since there is nothing in any degree praiseworthy which proceeds not from him’ (*Inst.* III.14.2). The pagan virtues serve an important civic function; they are the ‘instruments of God to preserve human society’ (*Inst.* III.14.3). Yet Calvin cannot resist repeating that even these divine gifts may be polluted if they are undertaken by ‘strangers to the true God’ who seek only their own ambition (*Inst.* III.14.3). Thus, Calvin displays what one commentator calls ‘fragments of a virtue system.’<sup>484</sup> That is, when he speaks of ‘virtue’, ‘moderation’, and ‘nature’, he does not invoke the same presuppositions as did Aquinas or even Augustine. Yet there is sufficient continuity to warrant the inclusion of his thought in this study, provided that this reading accounts for the differences in language and moral paradigm that arise, while simultaneously keeping watch for points of connection.

## **5.2 Temperance in the Thought of Calvin**

At first glance, John Calvin is not a major player in the historical journey of temperance, as his commitments to Reformation theology and distrust of classical morality ran counter to the paradigms both of habituated and mimetic virtue. However, his concern for sanctification and moral order pervades his theology, his ecclesiology, and his civic policy, intersecting with the concepts of temperance and moderation in significant ways.

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<sup>484</sup> Raymond Kemp Anderson, *Love and Order: The Life-Structuring Dynamics of Grace and Virtue* (Chambersburg PA: Anderson [self-published], 1973), 302.



## 5.2.1 Foundations of Calvin's Ethics

Specific to the purpose of this study, Calvin's theological and ethical thought arises directly from his understanding of the creation, corruption, and governance of the world. These concepts permeate his thought and form the core of his theological work, both generally and regarding temperance.

### 5.2.1.1 Creation as Order

Calvin believed the world to be intentionally created by God, its design revealing God's 'wisdom, power, justice, and goodness' (*Inst.* I.13.21). During creation, everything receives its particular place in the general order of creation and is structured as one part within the whole.

How great the Architect must be who framed and ordered the multitude of the starry host so admirably, that it is impossible to imagine a more glorious sight, so stationing some, and fixing them to particular spots that they cannot move; giving a freer course to others yet setting limits to their wanderings; so tempering the movement of the whole as to measure out day and night, months, years, and seasons, and at the same time so regulating the inequality of days as to prevent everything like confusion. (*Inst.* I.13.21)

'Framed and ordered'; 'stationing' and 'fixing'; 'setting limits', 'tempering', 'measure out', 'regulating' – such phrases reveal Calvin's concern for the order of creation. This order is displayed in nature, 'nature being more properly the order which has been established by God' (*Inst.* I.5.5). It arises directly from God and cannot exist with him; in his absence, all is disorder and confusion (*Comm.* Ps 14.2; 145.10; *Comm.* Gen 1.2). A favorite term within Calvin's thought is measure; God has 'measured' the earth 'with such exact proportion' for the purpose of 'preserving order' (*Comm.* Isa 48.13). This order contains a cosmological model; the order instituted by God within the heavens descends naturally to the rest of creation, including humanity. The higher elements rule the lower, with God governing the

entirety. Humanity is similarly ordered, a ‘microcosm (miniature world)’ that displays ‘undoubted evidence of the heavenly grace by which he lives, and moves, and has his being’ (*Inst.* I.5.3, c.f. *Comm.* Gen 1.26). The harmony of the created order is the rule and measure for the harmony of the human life; and God, as creator, shall be the measure of all things.

However, Calvin’s cosmology does not restrict this order to the physical world; rather, it transcends it. In classical philosophy, order and measure are like an inner law, something of a center of gravity arising in the cosmos. For Calvin, however, order arises directly from God and is united with him. Creation is constantly subjected to divine government, effected through moderation and for the purpose of realizing its predetermined destiny. Calvin does not stop with a stagnant, unvarying idea of creation and order, nor does he subscribe to the Stoic idea of the divine subsumed within the cosmos. While God’s order is unchanging, it is, for Calvin, simultaneously dynamic in nature. ‘God is deemed omnipotent,’ writes Calvin, ‘not because he can act though he may cease or be idle, or because by a general instinct he continues the order of nature previously appointed; but because, governing heaven and earth by his providence, he so overrules all things that nothing happens without his counsel’ (*Inst.* I.16.3). God does not lose interest in his creation but actively governs it, ‘regulating all things with fatherly kindness’ (*Comm.* Isa 51.6). Calvin’s preferred term for this is moderation; ‘according to his incomprehensible council,’ declares Calvin, ‘he moderates almost anything that happens to exist in the world’ (*Inst.* III.20.15).

### 5.2.1.2 Corruption and Disorder

If God has given a measure to everything, if he moderates these same things over a period of time, how does one explain the disharmony, the immoderation now present in creation? Calvin finds the cause in the presence of sin and evil, which resulted directly from the fall in Genesis 2. Although God's wisdom was infused into creation, the fall has corrupted this wisdom and goodness. All of creation, including humanity, now suffers total depravity: 'For our nature is not merely empty and destitute, but it is so fecund of every kind of evil that it cannot be inactive' (*Inst.* II.1.9). This corruption exhibits more than a lack of goodness; it is vigorous and active in its malevolence.

Reason no longer leads humanity to any good end but is also entirely corrupted by Adam's sin, so that 'every part of man, from the understanding to the will, from the soul to the flesh, is defiled and altogether filled with that concupiscence' (*Inst.* I.1.8).<sup>485</sup> Sin has displaced humanity from its moral center of gravity, away from the divine order and into moral chaos. Moreover, this corruption results in confusion and mayhem, where 'the legitimate order which God originally established no longer shines forth' (*Comm.* Ps 8.7-9). The result of losing connection with measure and limit, it leads to 'a perpetual disorder and excess' (*Inst.* II.3.12). This chaos affects every area of life: the turmoil of the conflicted soul 'results from the depravation of nature' (*Inst.* I.15.6); the appetites will continually run towards excess (*Inst.* III.3.12). Even the Catholic Church is described as a place 'where, in short, all things are in such disorder as to present the appearance of Babylon rather than the holy city of God' (*Inst.* IV.2.12).

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<sup>485</sup> Here Calvin distances himself from classical and scholastic thought on the positive capabilities of reason; see Guenther H. Haas, 'Calvin's Ethics', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 93-105 (93).

The only hope is the interruption of the grace of God in the sinful life, whereby ‘God make us new creatures by his mysterious grace’ (*Comm.* Ps 14.3; see also *Inst.* II.1.7). This is accomplished only by the justifying work of Christ on the cross (*Comm.* Jn 13.31). As humble sinners accept this saving grace and receive the sacrament of baptism, they may participate in his holiness before God (*Comm.* Rom 6.3-5). Although the image of God has been destroyed by original sin, the restoration accomplished through supernatural grace provides a glimpse of what it might have been (*Comm.* Gen 1.26, cf. *Inst.* I.15.3). However, this restoration is incomplete; humanity will continue in sinfulness until the eschaton.

It hence follows, that as long as we are children of Adam, and nothing more than men, we are in bondage to sin, that we can do nothing else but sin; but that being grafted in Christ, we are delivered from this miserable thralldom; not that we immediately cease entirely to sin, but that we become at last victorious in the contest (*Comm.* Rom 6.6)

In order to bring humanity as close as possible to its original (and simultaneously final) state of holiness, the sinful self must first be put to death. This is the task of mortification.

### **5.2.1.3 Mortification**

Mortification is the death of the sinful self or ‘old man’ of the Pauline epistles. It is the natural outcome of being grafted into Christ: ‘The Apostle denies that any man truly has learned Christ who has not learned to put off “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on Christ”’ (*Inst.* III.6.4).<sup>486</sup> It is accomplished through a twofold process of inner and outer mortification. Inner mortification involves the self-denial of the corrupted nature (*Inst.* III.3.1-10; 7.1-10). ‘We are not our own,’ states Calvin; ‘therefore, let us not make it our end to seek

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<sup>486</sup> Calvin’s use of ‘put on Christ’ is somewhat ironic in light of his concerns about mimetic virtue; see Herdt, 198-202.

what may be agreeable to our carnal nature. We are not our own; therefore, as far as possible, let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours' (*Inst.* III.7.1). This self-denial is not its own end, but crushes all 'vain thoughts,' suppressing 'pride, show, and ostentation; or, secondly, for avarice, lust, luxury, effeminacy, or other vices which are engendered by self-love' (*Inst.* III.7.2). Inner mortification acts to curb excess and preserve proper limits; God 'may mortify, tame, and cauterize their flesh, which, if not curbed in this manner, would wanton and exult above measure' (*Inst.* III.21.46).

Outer mortification is the practice of suffering and carrying the cross (*Inst.* III.8.1-11). When the faithful 'are visited with sore anguish and very heavy afflictions,' they realize that 'God wishes to try their faith' (*Comm.* Isa 26.18). It is the natural outcome of being joined to Christ; when the sinful self 'is fastened to the cross of Christ,' it reveals that 'that we cannot be otherwise put to death than by partaking of his death' (*Comm.* Rom 6.6). Keeping the eyes and heart fixed upon Christ brings comfort to the afflicted believers, who recognize that they 'are holding fellowship with the sufferings of Christ' (*Inst.* III.8.1). Likewise, their sufferings afford them the opportunity to both increase and display godly virtue – namely, patience, fortitude, and moderation (*Inst.* III.8.8). Peter Leithart notes that Calvin speaks of mortification and suffering 'in almost sacramental terms,' speaking of hardships as 'seals of adoption,' 'evidence of our salvation,' and 'evidence of the grace of God' (*Comm.* Phil 1.28).<sup>487</sup>

Mortification is necessary because without it, there can be no vivification (*vivificatio*), what Calvin calls 'quickening' (*Inst.* III.3.3). It is tied to the crucifixion of Christ, tied to 'communion with the cross,' just as vivification is tied to his

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<sup>487</sup> Peter Leithart, 'Stoic Elements in Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life: Part II. Mortification', *Westminster Theological Journal* 55:2 (1993b), 191-208 (201).

resurrection (*Inst.* II.16.13). However, Karl Barth insightfully notes that Calvin tends towards ‘a curious over-emphasising [*sic*] of *mortificatio* at the expense of *vivificatio*’, which points to his larger tendency to favor the Old Testament in matters of morality.<sup>488</sup> Indeed, Calvin’s view of mortification echoes few New Testament themes beyond that of the cross, relying instead on the Decalogue as a moral framework, although this ‘moral law’ finds its fulfillment in Christ, particularly as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>489</sup> Explicating the fourth commandment, Calvin connects sanctification with mortification and the resignation of internal will. Only then, he says, can a believer forego works righteousness for the ‘Sabbath rest’ promised in Hebrews:

If our sanctification consists in the mortification of our own will, the analogy between the external sign and the thing signified is most appropriate. We must rest entirely, in order that God may work in us; we must resign our own will, yield up our heart, and abandon all the lusts of the flesh. (*Inst.* II.8.29)

This command to ‘Sabbath rest’ is somewhat ironic, given the constant struggle of the elect to inward scrutiny and outward suffering. For Calvin, the Christian life involves an ongoing battle against concupiscence and pride, although the Sabbath rest of Hebrews has been achieved, at least in theory.

As stated above, mortification does not exist for its own sake. Calvin prescribes the rigors of mortification with a stated purpose: ‘These, I say, are the surest foundations of a well-regulated life’ (*Inst.* III.6.3). Thus, mortification is the means of achieving one of Calvin’s most important objectives – moderation.

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<sup>488</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4, part 2, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 575. Moreover, this is only one understanding of Old Testament ethics, as Barth maintains that this emphasis ‘might be justified to some extent from the older but not from the later prophets of the Old Testament, and certainly not from what is understood by *metanoia* in the New’ (575).

<sup>489</sup> Whereas the cross is the central moral theme of Luther’s thought, Calvin centers his moral thought on the Decalogue, which he calls the ‘moral law’; see Haas, 97-101.

### 5.2.2 Moderation

Moderation (*moderatio*) is the most distinct and recurring theme within Calvin's moral appeal; its language saturates his work.<sup>490</sup> Calvin's paradigm of moderation is modeled on God, the divine Moderator, who created the world in order to moderate and govern it.

After learning that there is a Creator, it must forthwith infer that he is also a Governor and Preserver, and that, not by producing a kind of general motion in the machine of the globe as well as in each of its parts, but by a special providence sustaining, cherishing, superintending, all the things which he has made. (*Inst.* I.16.1)

This position stands against both the disinterested, uninvolved creator of the Epicureans and the Stoic divine *logos* that dissolves into nature. The divine moderator, who orders and sets all things in place, attends both to the cosmos at large and to the microcosm of humanity: 'Hence we maintain, that by his providence, not heaven and earth and inanimate creatures only, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which he has destined' (*Inst.* I.16.8).

Throughout his writings, Calvin makes frequent use of a particular set of terms – restraint, bridle, control, curb, subdue, measure, limit, due limit, excess, order, disorder – that say much about the sphere, mode of action, and intended result of this moderation.<sup>491</sup> Within Calvin's moral theology, moderation has three primary components: measure, restraint, and restoration of order. These correspond to three questions regarding moderation – the *what*, the *how*, and the *why*. The natural beginning is with the first component: its primary characteristic – the *what* of moderation – is moral *measure*.

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<sup>490</sup> See William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86-91; Peter Leithart, 'Stoic Elements in Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life: Part III. Christian Moderation', *Westminster Theological Journal* 56:1 (1994), 59-85 (1994), 82; William R. Stevenson, 'Calvin and Political Issues', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 173-187 (178).

<sup>491</sup> Interestingly, several of these terms – restrain, bridle, curb – are also found in Aquinas; see 4.3.3.2 (B) above.

### 5.2.2.1 Measure – the *What of Moderation*

For Calvin, the idea of moderation is closely tied to the idea of measure; indeed, one commentator, following Calvin, often employs the word ‘measure’ when referring to his concept of moderation, to the point of using the terms interchangeably. In his commentary on Isaiah, Calvin draws attention to the embedding of the word for moderation within the word for measure (*Comm. Isa* 27.8). Thus, to moderate something means to bring it into compliance with its God-given measure: ‘So also God is said to treat all things by weight and measure, since he does nothing with confusion, but uses moderation; and, according to ordinary language, nothing is more or less than it should be’ (*Comm. Dan* 5.25-28). Measure is itself a highly meaningful term for Calvin. Appearing over one hundred times in the *Institutes* alone, it represents the sizes, portions, and relationships that are established by divine order, the limits that maintain this order, and the capacities assigned by one’s place in it.

Calvin applies these concepts to all areas of life. God governs the heavens by ‘tempering the movement of the whole as to measure out day and night, months, years, and seasons’ (*Inst.* I.14.21).<sup>492</sup> God assigns each person ‘a measure of faith,’ a ‘curb to keep us modest’ (*Inst.* III.2.4). Superstition is merely religion exceeding ‘the measure which reason prescribes’ (*Inst.* I.12.1); in an interesting similarity to Aquinas’ warnings against curiosity, Calvin counsels those ‘who love soberness, and are contented with the measure of faith’ to ‘briefly receive what is useful to be known’ (*Inst.* I.13.20; cf. *Inst.* III.21.3). Even marital sexuality should exhibit ‘measure and modesty’ and avoid ‘the extreme of wantonness’ (*Inst.* II.9.44). Calvin also connects the ideas of measure and restraint: ‘Where too much liberty is given to them, they break forth without measure or restraint’ (*Inst.* III.10.3). These last two

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<sup>492</sup> Note the use of ‘tempering’, which Calvin rarely applies to ideas of moderation.



connections reveal the second component of Calvin's use of moderation: its primary mechanism – the *how* of moderation – is moral *restraint*.

#### **5.2.2.2 Restraint – the *How* of Moderation**

Calvin believes that most moral errors result from exceeding the divinely appointed measure; thus, moderation primarily connotes an exercise of control and restraint. For mature believers, who are capable of governing themselves, moderation functions as self-discipline. However, most people are unable to recognize or fulfill the external commands of righteousness; for them, other things must function as arbitrators of divine moderation.<sup>493</sup> This restraint is accomplished through various means: reason, religion, civic law, even love. 'The Law,' writes Calvin, 'is designed as a bridle to curb men, and prevent them from turning aside to spurious worship' (*Inst.* I.2.1). Reason also participates in the office of *moderatio*, 'as reason ought to govern men and to bridle their appetites' (*Comm.* Jude 10). Yet reason itself requires control: 'The liberty of the human mind,' he says, 'must be restrained and bridled, that it not be wise, apart from the doctrine of Christ' (*Comm.* 2 Cor 10.5). As a means of governance, love will prevent someone from 'breaking into ferocity' (*Comm.* 1 Cor 13.4). Yet due to their nature as passions, even love and religion (particularly religious zeal) must themselves be moderated, lest they exceed their appropriate limits (*Comm.* Ex 11.8). Interestingly (and in another echo of Aquinas), it has a strong connection with clemency, regulating ecclesial, civic, and even divine discipline (*Inst.* IV.12.10). Although God's power is without limit (*Comm.* Ps 61.1), even he chooses to act with moderation in the chastisement of his people: 'This term "cup" serves to

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<sup>493</sup> Harro Höpfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 201-2.

express the moderation of the divine judgment; that the Lord, though he punish his people severely, still observes a limit' (*Comm. Isa* 51.17).

The virtues associated with 'moderation' also enlighten its meaning. Grouped with abstinence, sobriety, and frugality (*Inst.* III.10.5), it implies both 'disciplined frugality and orderly restraint.'<sup>494</sup> This facet of moderation is highlighted by Calvin's related terminology. 'Bridle' (*frenum*) is a common companion to *moderatio* (e.g. *Comm. Dan* 10.3; *Inst.* IV.12.1), as some people 'have need of a bridle to restrain them from giving full scope to their passions, and thereby utterly losing all desire after righteousness' (*Inst.* II.7.11). Regarding the tongue, he says 'that if it be modest and well regulated, it becomes a bridle to the whole life' (*Comm. Jas* 3.5). It is often paired with even stronger language; Calvin urges that desires be 'curbed' (e.g. *Inst.* I.4.12; I.12.1; III.2.23), 'chained' (*Inst.* II.2.8; III.4.13), 'repressed' (*Inst.* I.14.1; III.2.22; IV.4.12), and 'beaten down' (*Inst.* III.15.4). The unregenerate choose to indulge their carnal appetites, instead of 'curbing them with the bridle of the Holy Spirit' (*Inst.* I.4.4). Through the 'bridle of modesty' God can 'train his people to humility' (*Inst.* III.2.23).

Self-control and restraint underlie much of Calvin's thought, and he often appears to valorize them. He acknowledges that it can be difficult to accustom oneself to such self-mastery, 'but the more difficult it is, the more strenuous ought to be his efforts to attain it' (*Comm. Ps* 69.4). Yet Calvin's continued insistence on restraint serves a larger purpose, which is the final component in Calvin's use of moderation. Its primary purpose – the *why* of moderation – is *restoration* of moral order.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Stevenson, 178.

<sup>495</sup> This phrase comes from the title of chapter five ('Restoring Order') in Bouwsma, 86-97, and to which this section is indebted for its inspiration.

### 5.2.2.3 Restoration of Order – the *Why* of Moderation

The goal of moderation is the restoration of order, which is divinely appointed and originated in the rule God instituted at creation.<sup>496</sup> Calvin is deeply concerned with the establishment and maintenance of order, seeking to impress upon the elect ‘how much God is pleased with regular government and the good order of society’ (*Comm. Isa* 24.2). He frames his theological, ecclesiological, and civic efforts in a positive light, reminding the elect ‘how great a privilege it is to have it preserved among us’ (*Comm. Isa* 24.2). For Calvin, the only true restoration of order occurs in the justifying death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ: ‘There has been an astonishing change of things, the condemnation of all men has been manifested, sin has been blotted out, salvation has been restored to men; and, in short, the whole world has been renewed, and everything restored to good order’ (*Comm. Jn.* 13.31). The elect (inasmuch as they are joined to Christ) can participate in this restoration and renewal, as, thereby confirming their adoption as the children of God (*Inst.* III.6.1). However, the corruption of the present life means that the restoration is incomplete until the eschaton; hence the need for mortification. Mortification and moderation have something of a cyclical, reinforcing relationship. Mortification facilitates moderation by restraining immorality and wickedness, as when Calvin describes the various forms of self-denial in Titus 2.11-14 as various parts of ‘a well-ordered life’ (*Inst.* III.7.3). Moderation, in turn, reinforces the prohibition of sin, as ‘when good is ordered, the evil which is opposed to it is forbidden’ (*Inst.* II.8.9).

Moderation is an operative concept for Calvin, as it is the means by which this restoration is possible. In fact, Calvin employs moderation in a manner similar to Augustine’s use of continence. Through continence, Augustine is brought to

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<sup>496</sup> See 5.2.1.1 above for the discussion of God, creation, and order.

conversion and restored to God (*conf.* 8.11.27, 10.29.40); through moderation, Calvin will bring all the elect into concord and harmony with the righteousness of God (*Inst.* III.6.1). Indeed, he sounds quite Augustinian as he describes God's loving recollection of his people: 'For when we were scattered abroad like lost sheep, wandering through the labyrinth of this world, he brought us back again to his own fold' (*Inst.* III.6.2).<sup>497</sup> There is also the analogy of healing present in both accounts. For Augustine, the goal of continence is 'not to repress some evils by other evils, but to heal all evils by goods' (*cont.* 28); similarly, Calvin speaks of God 'curing the diseases' of wicked and disordered desire (*Inst.* II.3.3). This passage highlights Calvin's differing views of the elect amongst the world: moderation heals in the elect those things which interfere with 'the established order of things', whereas in the unregenerate, they are merely restrained (*Inst.* II.3.3).

Calvin implicitly follows Augustine in his moral thought, particularly regarding the life of the flesh. Like Augustine, Calvin views concupiscence as the source of inner and outer corruption; and he appears to follow Augustine in the manner of the remedy as well. That is, moderation functions in a similar manner for Calvin as continence does for Augustine, in that it is the mechanism by which the Christian life is enabled to resist against corruption and grow into all godliness.

#### **5.2.2.4 Conclusions on Moderation in Calvin**

Calvin treatment of moderation contains several classical echoes. At times, Calvin's moderation sounds quite like the Aristotelian mean: 'We must therefore observe a mean, that we may use them with a pure conscience, whether for necessity or for pleasure' (*Inst.* III.10.1). Interestingly, Calvin also sounds somewhat Thomistic at

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<sup>497</sup> 'For by continence we are gathered together and brought back to the One from whom we have dispersed into many things' (*conf.* 10.29.40).

times; he recognizes the importance of meeting the needs of this life (*Inst.* III.10.2), and he acknowledges that ‘special propriety’ which belongs to ‘the part that nature has assigned to him’ (*Comm.* 1 Cor 7.36.). Finally, Calvin commends moderation instead of the ‘hardened stupidity’ of Stoic *apatheia*, and does so by citing the example of Christ (*Comm.* Jn 11.33).<sup>498</sup>

Calvin lived during a time of genuine chaos and sought to reestablish some sort of order on earth that mirrored the cosmic order instituted and sustained by the active work of God. In this reading, moderation tends to the somewhat pessimistic conception of order as a fear of losing control of an out-of-control world. This is not a negative in itself, as order originates from God and is a part of all civil society; however, it does not contain the fullness of the positive conception of order as balance and harmony.<sup>499</sup> Other readings are more positive. For Raymond Anderson, moderation, which begins as ‘one of Calvin’s most problematic concepts’, is actually the link between his ideas of the ‘reflective address’ and the ‘active expressional’ components of the believer’s life, between internal devotion and external righteousness. Neither a mean between extremes nor an ironclad system of control, moderation serves as a system of guidance, ‘an ordering process through which our actions are kept relevant and efficient in terms of their use.’<sup>500</sup> He employs the illustration of a court moderator, overseeing the business at hand. Ultimately, moderation (like most of Calvin’s moral theory) relies primarily upon God. ‘Nothing is more useful for preserving our moderation,’ he says, ‘than to depend upon God’s help, and having the testimony of a good conscience, to rely upon his judgment’

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<sup>498</sup> Leithart, ‘Moderation’, notes the non-biblical sources for much of Calvin’s conception of moderation, particularly when associated with tranquility of mind (69-74).

<sup>499</sup> Hopfl, 54.

<sup>500</sup> Anderson, 319-20.

(*Comm.* Ps 34.16). The next and final step is considering the relationship between moderation and temperance in Calvin's moral thought.

### 5.2.3. Temperance

As with those considered so far in this thesis, Calvin uses the term 'temperance' in both a narrow and a comprehensive sense, and with regard to both particular objects and to a more general lifestyle. As a rule, Calvin employs temperance in a secondary capacity, subsuming it within the larger categories of mortification and moderation. However, it remains a significant moral concept, retaining facets from its depiction within both the classical and Christian traditions.

#### 5.2.3.1 The Narrow Sense of Temperance

In practical matters, and regarding the traditional objects of temperance and moderation, Calvin takes a fairly central position. Regarding the use of created goods, Calvin moves between natural use, 'common sense' principles and interjected scriptural norms (*Inst.* III.10.1-3). He recognizes both the necessity and the attractiveness of these goods: 'For if we are to live, we must use the necessary supports of life; nor can we even shun those things which seem more subservient to delight than to necessity' (*Inst.* III.10.1). Again, Calvin almost echoes Aquinas in his view on the 'natural use of created goods' (*Inst.* III.10.1).<sup>501</sup> The point common to both his rationales is that moderation enables believers to use created goods 'only in so far as they assist our progress, rather than retard it' (*Inst.* III.10.1). Again sounding almost strikingly Aristotelian, he admits the difficulty of not falling into excess, either in indulgence or austerity, and cites Paul's advice to 'use the world without abusing

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<sup>501</sup> *ST.* II.II 141.

it' (1 Cor. 7.30-1). Yet he clearly distinguishes between the occasion of fasting and the lifestyle of temperance, 'for the children of God, we know, ought through their whole life to be sober and temperate in their habits' (*Comm.* Joel 2.15-17; cf. *Comm.* Dan 10.2-3; *Comm.* Matt 4:1-4; Mark 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-4). He has little patience for the overly austere, 'inhuman philosophy' that 'not only maliciously deprives us of the lawful fruit of the divine beneficence, but cannot be realised without depriving man of all his senses, and reducing him to a block' (*Inst.* III.10.3). Despite his rhetoric of restraint, Calvin does appreciate the good gifts of creation; 'we hold that the object of creating all things,' he says, 'was to teach us to know their author, and feel grateful for his indulgence' (*Inst.* III.10.3). In another curiously Thomistic echo, Calvin exhibits something of an *exitus-reditus* structure in his thought on created goods: all things come from God, and the use of them should direct us, with gratitude, back to their Creator.

### **5.2.3.2 Sexuality and Continenence**

This commonsensical approach to creation is perhaps most clearly seen in his thought on sexuality. While still retaining some of the deep-seated unease it evokes in Augustine, Calvin accepts the reality of sexual desire in a far more realistic manner than did Augustine or the early church fathers. This, combined with the Reformation distrust of all things Catholic, forms his thought on sexual practice. Unlike Augustine, he did not encourage or valorize the practice of sexual continence; in fact, he castigates those persons 'who grant no pardon when any one proves unequal to the performance of his vow' (*Inst.* IV.13.17). Celibacy is 'a special grace which the Lord bestows only on certain individuals, in order that they may be less encumbered in his

service' (*Inst.* II.8.43). Particular decisions regarding sexuality should arise directly from each individual's ability and gifting.

Do we not oppose God, and nature as constituted by him, if we do not accommodate our mode of life to the measure of our ability? The Lord prohibits fornication, therefore he requires purity and chastity. The only method which each has of preserving it is to measure himself by his capacity. (*Inst.* II.8.43)

To attempt total continence is to oppose God and the design of his creation. The important point, for Calvin, is that the Lord prohibits fornication and requires chastity. The 'mode of life' is therefore to be determined by each person's capacity for sexual renunciation, determined by self-measure. Accurate self-knowledge is what sets the course of each person's sexual life; self-control is required merely to maintain a pure and chaste life within these bounds. Marital sexual chastity is therefore perfectly acceptable, what he calls 'an equitable course' (*Inst.* IV.13.17).

However, even this should observe the measure of creation. Husbands and wives should maintain 'sobriety of behavior' to honor 'the dignity and temperance of married life' (*Inst.* II.8.44). Marriage among the believers should display 'measure and modesty' and 'not run to the extreme of wantonness,' which Ambrose calls 'committing adultery with one's wife' (*Inst.* II.8.44). This moderation beyond the sexual act, as the Lord 'is entitled to possess us entirely, requires integrity of body, soul, and spirit' (*Inst.* II.8.44). One should avoid 'lascivious attire, obscene gestures, and impure conversation' and not 'lay snares for our neighbor's chastity' (*Inst.* II.8.44). The central point, as with all created goods, is to remember their origin in God. 'When spouses are made aware that their union is blessed by the Lord,' he says, 'they are thereby reminded that they must not give way to intemperate and unrestrained indulgence. For though honourable wedlock veils the turpitude of incontinence, it does not follow that it ought forthwith to become a stimulus to it'



(*Inst.* II.8.44). Even within the bounds of marital fidelity, sexuality should display restraint and moderation.

### 5.2.3.3 The Comprehensive Sense of Temperance

The moderation of marital sexuality within the ‘measure of creation’ reveals a fuller, broader sense of temperance than these particular accounts might indicate. Running alongside these more specific applications more of temperance are more ‘classical’ themes of self-governance, preservation of piety and righteousness, and sober living. The fullest treatment of temperance occurs in the commentary on Titus.

But as the exercises of godliness may be regarded as appendages to the first table, so ‘temperance,’ which Paul mentions in this passage, aims at nothing else than keeping the law, and, as I said before about patience, is added to the former as a seasoning. Nor does the Apostle contradict himself, when at one time he describes patience, and at another time temperance, as the perfection of a holy life; for they are not distinct virtues, since *sōphrosynē* (here translated temperance) includes patience under it. (*Comm.* Titus 2.12)<sup>502</sup>

Temperance appears here, not merely as the virtue of eating and drinking, but in the larger sense of the well-ordered life. Its stated goal is ‘keeping the law’, which means the maintenance of external righteousness, an enormously important theme for Calvin.<sup>503</sup> Temperance ‘seasons’ the presence of piety and righteousness, in the preservative sense; through temperance, piety and righteousness are preserved. It is therefore no surprise that he calls it ‘the perfection of a holy life.’ The comparison of temperance and patience (both of which operate through self-denial to reinforce righteousness) recalls the similar parallel between Calvin’s moderation and

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<sup>502</sup> ‘The former’ mentioned here are piety and righteousness.

<sup>503</sup> See *Inst.* 2.2.15,24; 2.7.6-13; 2.8.1. See also Haas, 97-103, for an extended discussion of the role and use of ‘law’ in Calvin’s ethics.

Augustine's continence, and the fact that Augustine's *On Contenance* and *On Patience* display similar styles of argument reinforces Calvin's placing them in parallel.<sup>504</sup>

This comprehensive sense of temperance extends throughout his commentary on Titus. Children should be 'educated to temperance and frugality' (*Comm. Titus* 1.6). Young women should be instructed in temperance by the elder women, leading 'chaste and decent lives' (*Comm. Titus* 2.4).

In short, he wishes women to be restrained, by conjugal love and affection for their children, from giving themselves up to licentious attachments, he wishes them to rule their own house in a sober and orderly manner, forbids them to wander about in public places, bids them be chaste, and at the same time modest, so as to be subject to the dominion of their husbands. (*Comm. Titus* 2.4)

Here, temperance bespeaks chastity, modesty, and overall self-rule. This passage contains some interesting classical echoes. Calvin approvingly cites Socrates and Pericles calling *sōphrosynē* the primary virtue for women (*Comm. Titus* 2.1-5, n.240). He also cites Plato, who he says regarded temperance as that which 'cures the whole understanding of man' (*Comm. Titus* 2.6). He then equates this with being 'well regulated and obedient to reason' (*Comm. Titus* 2.6). Temperance facilitates the gaining of knowledge (*Comm. 2 Pet* 1.8), which sounds similar to the function of Aristotelian *sōphrosynē* as 'saving *phronēsis*' (*Eth.Nic.* 1140b11-12). Calvin also approvingly notes Aristotle's distinction between incontinence and intemperance, noting that in the incontinent person, 'when the passion is over, repentance immediately succeeds' but the intemperate person does not respond to 'a sense of sin' (*Inst.* II.2.23). Temperance, therefore, is implicitly connected with having one's actions and one's intentions in alignment.

As with moderation, temperance is often grouped with terms that enlighten its meaning. Both temperance and chastity are grouped under 'sobriety', which Calvin

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<sup>504</sup> Gerald Schlabach helpfully brought the parallels between these Augustinian works to my attention.

describes as ‘the pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patient endurance in want’ (*Inst.* III.7.3; cf. *Comm.* Luke 16.1-15). While the temperate man does not indulge in excessive eating or drinking, this does not express ‘the whole of temperance’ (*Comm.* Jas 1.27). The whole of temperance, rather, is ‘spiritual sobriety, when all our thoughts and affections are so kept as not to be inebriated with the allurements of this world’ (*Comm.* 1 Pet 1.13). Thus, temperance is not as large or operative a category as moderation, but it is certainly more expansive than mere regulation of the physical appetites.

#### **5.2.4 Conclusions on Temperance and Moderation in Calvin**

As noted earlier, Calvin is not generally regarded as the go-to source for an examination of temperance *per se*; for despite sharing terminology and moral arena with classical and Catholic virtue, Calvin’s treatment of temperance and moderation diverge in several important areas. Nevertheless, several valuable insights have emerged. First, moderation is clearly a central concept for Calvin. Its negative connotations include restraint, repression, and control; however, they are balanced by the positive nuances of governance, order, measure, and model. It has both positive and negative glosses; it both connects and restrains. As a rule, Calvin’s moderation is more operative than descriptive, more active than passive, more explicitly tied to structure than to amount than its traditional understanding. The concept of ‘moderation-in-all-things’ is not completely overturned, but it yields to a model that is noticeably more dynamic, despite its negative overtones. Calvin’s moderation can provide an alternative to a stagnant deontology; instead of ‘a tense and static balance between warring principles,’ it is ‘a responsive process, which steers the whole

man.<sup>505</sup> At times, Calvin almost seems to view moderation as an end in itself, as when he says, ‘We must so cherish moderation that we do not try to make God render account to us, but so reverence his secret judgments as to consider his will the truly just cause of all things’ (*Inst.* I.17.1). It is critical to remember that moderation, like all things in God’s kingdom, only functions well when it serves a larger and proper end. Calvin considers those ends to be the restoration of the order instituted by God, both provisionally and in the eschatological sense.

Temperance, on the other hand, appears to share more similarities with its classical counterpart; and it contains both a practical and a systematic sense. Not surprisingly, its focus in concrete matters is largely upon restraint and control in the carnal life. In this, it promotes a middle, way, an ‘equitable course’ between extravagance and deprivation. It allows humanity to employ the natural things of this life, using and enjoying all created goods in a manner that reflects and reinforces God’s created order. Marital sexuality should be measured and modest. Even in its more practical sense, Calvin carefully distinguishes between occasional actions and a truly temperate lifestyle. This lifestyle of true temperance exhibits the larger, more comprehensive sense of temperance as chastity, modesty, and overall self-rule. Temperance brings a sober reflection and examen to human desire and reason; by enabling mortification, it empowers the continued pursuit of holy living via the keeping of the law (both moral and civil). These broader treatments of temperance also contain the strongest classical echoes in Calvin’s work on temperance, which reinforces the comprehensive aspect of its nature as a moral good.

Calvin’s treatment of temperance reflects the distinctive changes in his overall moral thought as a result of the Reformation. As a virtue (and generally as a moral

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<sup>505</sup> Anderson, 319-20.

potency), temperance is, for two reasons, rather demoted in status. First, because the larger ethical framework of classical and Catholic thought has been abandoned, Calvin does not recognize the ‘cardinality’ of the four cardinal virtues. In this practical sense, temperance appears as part of the larger category of mortification and restraint, the reverse of the classical position wherein self-control was the imperfect version of the fully-realized virtue of temperance. Thus temperance does not exist *qua* virtue in the manner sustained, in some way, throughout classical and Catholic moral thought. Second, what does remain of the virtue of temperance is incorporated somewhat under the larger moral category of moderation. That is, the practice of temperance in a sense enables mortification, which enables moderation, which in turn reestablishes the natural order lost after the fall. Temperance and moderation, in different ways, both appear in an overall, comprehensive sense, although moderation is more operative and temperance more practical, less wide-ranging.

In Book III of the *Institutes*, Calvin admits the seeming impossibility of human attempts to pursue righteousness and avoid the pollution of sin.

I insist not so strictly on evangelical perfection, as to refuse to acknowledge as a Christian any man who has not attained it. In this way all would be excluded from the Church, since there is no man who is not far removed from this perfection, while many, who have made but little progress, would be undeservedly dejected. (*Inst.* III.6.5)

‘What then?’ he asks, as if to forestall the questions he knows to be coming. His answer reflects the teleology (although often implicit) he perceives within the Christian life.

Let us set this before our eye as the end at which we ought constantly to aim. Let it be regarded as the goal towards which we are to run... If during the whole course of our life we seek and follow, we shall at length attain it, when relieved from the infirmity of the flesh we are admitted to full fellowship with God. (*Inst.* III.6.5)

Calvin may not be overly optimistic about humanity's progress, even the elect; but he keeps his eyes on the promised reward of heaven. 'Let every one of us go as far as his humble ability enables him ...No one will travel so badly as not to make some degree of progress' (*Inst.* III.6.5). While encouraging each believer in their journey (and despite the strictness of his ecclesiastical and civic expectations) Calvin was generally pessimistic regarding significant growth in sanctification. In stark contrast to this position stands the author of 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,' John Wesley.

### **5.3 Wesleyan Temperance**

As noted above, John Calvin engaged virtue when the state of the Reformation was still tenuous, so any interaction with virtue risked strengthening the scholastic moral theology of the Catholic Church. John Wesley, however, wrote within the context of a firmly established Reformation; that is, there was a viable, credible religious system outside of Catholicism, recognized and established in a multitude of countries and contexts. Moreover, John Wesley maintained his allegiance to the Church of England, which combined elements of both Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>506</sup> Therefore, classical and medieval moral theory could be engaged with less anxiety and more vigor.

#### **5.3.1 Theological Foundations**

Wesley was in agreement with the early Reformers on original sin and the total depravity of man, and on the consequent lack of any internal resources for either

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<sup>506</sup> Its official website describes it as 'both Catholic and Reformed,' which it traces back to the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559.

holiness or true happiness. Humanity is now ‘dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin’ (*Serm. 5.I.5*).<sup>507</sup>

[This depravity is] the condition wherein all men are since the Fall. We are all now ‘shapen in wickedness, and in sin did our mother conceive us.’ Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. (*Serm. 48.I.3*)

While ‘vestiges’ of the good man remain, they are damaged and in need of saving grace. Following from this was the doctrine, shared by Calvin and Luther, that justification was not by works but by grace.

### 5.3.1.1 A ‘Hair’s Breadth from Calvinism’

While agreeing with Calvin on the centrality of grace, Wesley did allow that a shadow of the image and likeness of God could remain, through which one could apprehend his fallen state. He maintains that the faith by which one accepts Christ is itself a gift of divine grace, proceeding from God the Father via the urging of the Holy Spirit (*Serm. 5.IV.5*). While human nature is fully depraved, grace does not destroy or suppress it, but rather perfects it (*Serm. 29, II.5.12*). Wesley never preached *sola fide*, as he saw and preached the role of works as the fruit of a life redeemed.<sup>508</sup> Wesley believed that God’s grace could both justify and sanctify, that it could both acquit and transform the believer. Moreover, his emphasis upon ‘entire sanctification’ and ‘Christian perfection’ stood in contrast to Calvin’s pessimism about the possibilities of human ‘perfection’ (*Inst. III.6.5*).<sup>509</sup> This emphasis on sanctification reveals his firm commitment to holiness. For Wesley, this ‘Christian perfection is not a state of

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<sup>507</sup> All citations from Wesley, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1985).

<sup>508</sup> D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), 13.

<sup>509</sup> See 5.2.4 above.

sinlessness, but neither is it a perpetual struggle.<sup>510</sup> It is, he says in almost Platonic language, ‘a peace and harmony, not a mixture of contrary affections’ (*Serm.* 83.10).

### 5.3.1.2 Happiness and Holiness

Moreover, Wesley frames his moral theology in a substantially teleological way.<sup>511</sup> In ‘The Unity of the Divine Being,’ Wesley answers the question ‘For what end did God create man?’ with ‘to glorify and enjoy him forever.’ He then continues: ‘You are made to be happy in God.’ ‘He made *you*,’ Wesley states, ‘and he made you to be happy in him, and nothing else can make you happy’ (*Serm.* 114.10).<sup>512</sup> Thus, his idea of holiness was eventually to be aligned with happiness.<sup>513</sup> While Calvin made the occasional nod to teleology, Wesley’s exhortations to entire sanctification suggest both journey and *telos*, as the believer strives to live into the fullness of his justification. This is revealed in his commonly referring to the Christian life as a *via salutis*, a ‘way of salvation.’ Additionally, his extended treatment of the Beatitudes, a centerpiece of his moral thought, is full of the language of blessedness.<sup>514</sup>

Furthermore, this happiness will increase as we ‘grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (*Serm.* 40.II.1). Wesley’s conception of

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<sup>510</sup> Randy L. Maddox, ‘A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley’s “Heart Religion”,’ in *“Heart Religion” in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, ed. Richard Steele (Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 3–31 (21).

<sup>511</sup> The framework of his moral theology has been debated. For affirmations of the teleological, eudaimonistic flavor of his work, see Clarence Bence, ‘John Wesley’s Teleological Hermeneutic’ (PhD dissertation, Emory University, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, ‘Characterizing Perfection: Second Thoughts on Character and Sanctification’, in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore H. Runyon (Nashville TN: Kingswood Books, 1985), 251-63; S. Long, *Moral Theology*; and Rebekah L. Miles, ‘Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral Life in John Wesley’, in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 207-24. In contrast, Ronald H. Stone, *John Wesley’s Life and Ethics* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2001) stresses the ‘ethic of love’ he sees in Wesley and describes his ethics as ‘rule-agapism’ (215). While admitting that character ‘is very important to his thought,’ he objects to a teleological reading of Wesley’s ethics based on his Wesley’s use of natural law and ‘principled arguments’ (216-7).

<sup>512</sup> Cf. Miles, ‘Happiness.’

<sup>513</sup> Albert C. Outler, *Evangelism & Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville TN: Discipleship Resources, 2000) notes 54 times when Wesley pairs these words (129).

<sup>514</sup> The word translated as ‘blessed,’ *makarios*, is the word used by Socrates at the conclusion of the *Charmides* (176a).



happiness is not classical, but lies firmly in the Augustinian tradition. In response to the question ‘what is religion then?’ he answers: ‘It is neither more nor less than love; it is love which “is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment”’ (*Serm.* 8.III.2). In Augustinian terms, Wesley exhorts believers to ‘this love ruling the whole life, animating all our tempers and passions, directing all our thoughts, words, and actions’ (*Serm.* 84.III.2).<sup>515</sup> It is, he says, ‘the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue’ (*Serm.* 17.I.11). The phrase he coined to encompass this rule of love, one of his most signature doctrines, was ‘Christian perfection’.

### 5.3.1.3 Christian Perfection

Wesley outlines his doctrine of Christian perfection in *Standard Sermon* 40, ‘Thoughts on Christian Perfection’ (based on Phil 3.12), and later in the treatise *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. For Wesley, ‘perfection’ is not a translation of the Latin *perfectio/perfectus* (‘faultless’, ‘unimprovable’), but rather of the Greek *teleōsis* (‘mature, complete’) which he received indirectly through the Fathers, and directly through Jeremy Taylor, Thomas á Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*, and William Law’s *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.<sup>516</sup> It is a ‘dynamic process’ of *devotio*, giving one’s whole life to God in a disciplined and aspiring manner. Both the goal *and* foundation of Christian faith, it has been described as a *telos* in holiness.<sup>517</sup>

Wesley’s talk of perfection reflects the influence of the virtue tradition. In ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection’, Wesley sounds much like *On the Morals of the Catholic Church* when he defines being a ‘perfect Christian as ‘loving God with

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<sup>515</sup> See *mor.* 15.25: ‘As to virtue leading us to a happy life, I hold virtue to be nothing else than perfect love of God.’

<sup>516</sup> Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 31.

<sup>517</sup> Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 171.

all our heart, and mind, and soul' (*Acct.* 17). Although it will certainly affect the believer's actions, perfection is chiefly concerned with the holy tempers; it is 'a habitual disposition of the soul' (*Serm.* 17.I.1). Indeed, perfection means 'the humble, gentle, patient love of God ruling all the tempers, moods, and action, the whole heart, by the whole life.'<sup>518</sup> Christian perfection thus means embodying 'these virtues of Christ,' the *imitatio Christi*.<sup>519</sup> Yet mere imitation is not enough; the way of perfected love is nothing less than *theosis*, the participation in the divine life through knowledge of Christ and the work of the Spirit. This renewal into the image of God, possible only through the righteousness of Christ, is the believer's true *telos*.<sup>520</sup>

A proper understanding of Wesley's eudaimonism sheds light on his concept of perfection, particularly the confusion between its instantaneous and progressive conceptions. As opposed to the idea of perfection as an immediate and completed occurrence (like the immediate nature of justification), Wesley's perfection was an important part of the *via salutis*. It is perfection in love, rooted in Christ who loved us and who we are called to imitate (Eph 5.1-2). In point of fact, 'A Plain Account' was a reaction to the 'entire sanctification' movement in the American colonies, who preached a doctrine of instant, sinless perfection that Wesley feared would lead to self-righteousness.<sup>521</sup> While a source of disagreement with the Calvinists, Christian perfection aligned quite naturally with the categories of holiness and happiness. However, Wesley's emphasis upon happiness is balanced by a doctrine explicitly shared with Calvin – his consistent emphasis on self-denial.

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<sup>518</sup> *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, John Telford, ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 5:38 (letter to Charles Wesley dated Jan 27, 1767).

<sup>519</sup> A good discussion of Wesley's use of *imitatio Christi* is Richard Heitzenrater, 'The *Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley's Ministry with the Poor', in *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, M. Douglas Meeks, ed. (Nashville TN: Kingwood Books, 1995).

<sup>520</sup> Long, *Moral Theology*, 175-6.

<sup>521</sup> See Outler, *John Wesley*, 251 and 299.

#### 5.3.1.4 Self-Denial

For Wesley, as for Calvin, self-denial is a core component of the moral life; indeed, he calls it ‘this grand doctrine of Christianity’ (*Serm.* 48.I.1). The burden of corrupt human nature requires ‘that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times, or in some things only, but at all times and in all things. Here, therefore, is a farther ground for constant and universal self-denial’ (*Serm.* 48.I.3). Like Calvin, Wesley divides self-denial into two portions. The first is denying oneself, which he calls ‘the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us’ (*Serm.* 48.I.2). This denial is not arbitrary, but refers to ‘any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to, God’ (*Serm.* 48.I.6). Avoiding such self-denial is pleasurable in the moment, but the consequences are dire, ‘strengthening the perverseness of our will’ and ‘increasing the corruption of our nature’ (*Serm.* 48.I.5). The second component is taking up the cross, which Wesley defines as ‘anything contrary to our will, anything displeasing to our nature,’ which ‘goes a little farther than denying ourselves; it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task to flesh and blood; – it being more easy to forego pleasure, than to endure pain’ (*Serm.* 48.I.7).

The importance of self-denial to Wesley’s moral and social thought is difficult to overstate. All varieties of ‘hindrances of our attaining grace or growing therein’ fall under these two categories: ‘either we do not deny ourselves, or we do not take up our cross’ (*Serm.* 48.4). He makes the connection explicit in ‘Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity’:

Why has Christianity done so little good, even among us? ...Plainly, because we have forgot, or at least not duly attended to, those solemn words of our Lord, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ It was the remark of a holy man, several years ago, ‘Never was there before a people in the Christian

Church, who had so much of the power of God among them, with so little self-denial.’ (*Serm.* 116.13)

Not only is one’s salvation endangered by lack of self-denial, the efficacy of the Church is imperiled as well. Wesley exhorts his followers to a level of actual holiness far beyond that urged by Calvin, perhaps because Calvin does not believe it possible in humanity’s corrupted state. Wesley’s emphasis on the journey of holiness and the fruits of the Christian life lead naturally into the topic of virtue; for, as we have seen, this is a significant part of the language he used for holiness.

### 5.3.2 Virtue in Wesley

While Calvin occasionally uses the word ‘virtue’ and occasionally employs it in a semi-classical light, Wesley moves much closer to the classical usage of virtue, both the word and the larger moral system. However, Wesley’s concept of virtue, like happiness, is rooted more deeply in scripture than in classical thought. For Wesley, virtue follows two categories: those possessed before the saving event, and those acquired afterwards. Unlike Luther, Wesley did not despise the ‘pagan’ virtues of the ancients.<sup>522</sup> Rather, he called them ‘natural virtues’ of an ‘obligatory nature;’ this, he says, is ‘barely the faith of a heathen’ (*Serm.* 1.1.1).<sup>523</sup> Without the propitiation of Christ and the renewal of the Spirit, they are empty. Thus they bring nothing to the saving encounter (*Serm.* 5.4.4; 4.8).<sup>524</sup> Moreover, the virtues are insecure ‘without constant self-denial’ (*Serm.* 17.II.8).

After the saving encounter, there are new options in the moral toolbox. The knowledge of Christ and the power of the Spirit work, as noted above, to bring the

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<sup>522</sup> See 4.2.3.3 above.

<sup>523</sup> He continues, ‘A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a heathen’ (*Serm.* 1.1.1).

<sup>524</sup> Long, *Moral Theology*, says that ‘these reveal the Trinitarian nature of his moral theology, and its dependence on grace’ (53).

believer more and more fully into participation in the divine nature. Can this new work properly be called virtue? Wesley says yes, although he imbues the term with fresh meaning. It is related to righteousness and ‘true holiness’ (*Serm.* 59.1). The law of God is ‘all virtues in one’; law is ‘divine virtue and wisdom in visible form’ (*Serm.* 32.2.4). Wesley calls it ‘godly sincerity’ in order to point to its end in God and thus distinguish it from the sincerity of the heathens (*Serm.* 12.13). Second Peter 1.3-4 says that Christian virtue is the means by which ‘we may obtain all that He has promised’ (*Expl.* 2 Pet. 1.4).<sup>525</sup> In anticipation of the eschaton, virtue acts now to refine the heart and make us cheerful and lively (*Serm.* 137.2.2). And as noted above, virtue is characterized by love, which is its ‘intrinsic excellence,’ and from which flow actions that are beautiful (*Serm.* 17.2.3).

### 5.3.2.1 The Role of Reason

Wesley does not locate true virtue in the pure function of rationality. In ‘The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,’ he defines reason as neither ‘carnal reason’ nor as ‘the highest gift of God,’ looking instead for a ‘medium between these extremes’ (*Serm.* 70.5).<sup>526</sup> For Wesley, reason is best described as *understanding*: ‘It means a faculty of the human soul; that faculty which exerts itself in three ways; – by simple apprehension, by judgement, and by discourse’ (*Serm.* 70.1.2). It is God-given and ‘of unspeakable use’ in ‘even a moderate share of reason in all our worldly employments’ (*Serm.* 70.II.10). However, he is careful to distinguish between what reason can and cannot do. Notably, it cannot produce the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love:

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<sup>525</sup> All (*Expl.*) citations are from John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850).

<sup>526</sup> Later in the sermon he asks, ‘Why should you run from one extreme to the other? Is not the middle way best?’ (*Serm.* 70.II.10).

Let reason do all that reason can: Employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and, consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness. Expect these from a higher source, even from the Father of the spirits of all flesh. (*Serm.* 70.II.10)

Thus, any true happiness must come from God as divine gift (*Serm.* 70.II.10).<sup>527</sup>

### 5.3.2.2 Virtue as ‘Holy Tempers’

Having dispensed with the classical ‘intellectual virtues’, the question becomes: Are the ‘theological virtues’ of Aquinas still virtues for Wesley? How does Wesley’s concept of virtue relate to faith, hope, and love? In ‘The Circumcision of the Heart,’ Wesley identifies these concepts with holiness. Circumcision of the heart is ‘that habitual disposition of the heart... which is termed holiness’ (*Serm.* 17.I.1). This implies the cleansing of the self from sin, and receiving the virtues of Christ Jesus, which are humility, faith, hope, and love. So the theological virtues are present, and arise directly from the believer’s sanctification.

This passage brings out an important point on language, which Wesley employs with a conflation somewhat like Augustine. While Wesley does use the word ‘virtue’, he more commonly uses ‘disposition’ and ‘temper’ in reference to the habituated, fixed state of being.<sup>528</sup> Moreover, these dispositions are not natural (or even rational) in the classical sense; they are akin to the fruits of the Spirit and thus must be inculcated by the Holy Spirit. They are ‘holy tempers.’ Wesley also uses the term ‘affections’ which, like their stronger counterparts the ‘passions,’ resemble the tempers in that they are also dispositions of the heart. However, they are more ‘transient,’ not as deeply established or stabilized as the tempers. Wesley describes

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<sup>527</sup> Note that Wesley does not use the phrase ‘theological virtues.’

<sup>528</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, ‘John Wesley’s Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers, and Affections’, *Methodist History* 36:3 (1998), 162-75 (165), and Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 69, both note that ‘disposition’ and ‘temper’ are virtually interchangeable in Wesley’s writings.

them as ‘the will exerting itself [in] various ways’ (*Serm.* 62.I.4). In other words, they are the expression of the will, the particular actualizations of an undergirding reality.

In his sermon ‘On Zeal,’ Wesley paints a vivid picture of the relationship between the components of the holy life, a picture which underscores the vital importance of the tempers.

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all holy tempers; - longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus.’ In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy*, whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers- by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed *works of piety* - reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, the church, dispersed all over the earth - a little emblem of which, of the church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation. (*Serm.* 92.II.5)

As they sit closest to the throne of love, these ‘holy tempers’ are ‘the only means of being truly alive to God’ and are therefore more central to Wesley’s moral thought than works of piety or mercy, or the gathering of the believers (*Serm.* 92.II.10). All works of righteousness are empty and void ‘unless they spring from holy tempers’ (*Serm.* 92.III.10). ‘Orthodoxy’ (or ‘right opinions’) and the holy tempers also have a causal connection, as Wesley states that ‘wrong opinions in religion naturally lead to wrong tempers’ (*Serm.* 120.15).<sup>529</sup> The discussion turns now to temperance, one of Wesley’s holy tempers.

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<sup>529</sup> Wesley then maintains that wrong doctrine leads, not just to wrong tempers, but also to ‘wrong practices’ (*Serm.* 120.15). This concern also appears in Sermon 116, ‘Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity’, wherein lack of proper doctrine is one step leading to an ineffective faith; see *Serm.* 116.7,8,13.

### 5.3.3 Wesleyan Temperance

While not foremost among Wesley's virtues, temperance does appear in his catalog. As with Calvin (and Augustine, and Aristotle), temperance appears in both a practical and a comprehensive sense. And like Calvin, Wesley often appends temperance to larger moral concepts such as self-denial and holiness. Its objects and meaning vary with the topic at hand, but some recurrent threads can be discerned.

#### 5.3.3.1 Practical Treatments of Temperance

Wesley employs temperance in a practical manner across the range of his works. In this, much of his usage displays a strong connection to self-control. Wesley recommends 'universal self-denial, temperance in all things, a firm resolve to take up the cross daily' (*Serm.* 93.III.7), which will enable believers 'to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, its passions and desires, and, in consequence of that inward change, to fulfill all outward righteousness' (*Serm.* 4.4). Temperance aids in the promulgation of holiness, as virtues 'without constant self-denial' are inconstant and fickle (*Serm.* 17.2.8). Abstinence from food he calls 'no other than Christian temperance' (*Serm.* 27.3.6), and he recommends fasting and temperance to bring bodies into subjection (*Prin.* 12.2). The audience of Second Peter received this stern imperative: 'Bear and forbear; sustain and abstain; deny yourself and take up your cross daily' (*Expl.* 2 Pet. 1.6). As one of the fruits of the Spirit, temperance partners with meekness to 'crucify the flesh' in order to 'walk as Christ also walked' (*Serm.* 4.4). It is connected with those persons who 'contend' by 'using the most rigorous self-denial in food, sleep, and every other sensual indulgence' (*Expl.* 1 Cor. 9.25). These forms of intemperance can be subtle, but are no less dangerous for their lack of vulgarity.



Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance; much less so as to violate health or impair their understanding by gluttony or drunkenness. But they live in a genteel, regular sensuality; in an elegant epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul, keeping it at a distance from all true religion. (*Serm.* 78.I.5)

Indeed, in light of Wesley's concerns with luxury and the lack of self-denial, this 'elegant epicurism' is as problematic as the coarsest excesses, as it prevents the believer from surrendering oneself to God's salvific grace and prevents that 'poverty of spirit' which prepares the ground for the cultivation of the holy tempers.<sup>530</sup> Wesley also counts unhealthful eating – wrong types, wrong amounts, wrong hours – to this genteel gluttony, using 'neither fasting nor abstinence' (*Acct.* 25.27). These types of intemperance in food echo Aquinas's 'species of gluttony' (II-II.148.4).<sup>531</sup> And in an original move, Wesley connects temperance to the self-indulgence of poor sleep habits: the intemperate 'do not rigorously adhere to what is best both for body and mind; otherwise they would constantly go to bed and rise early, and at a fixed hour' (*Acct.* 25.27). Redeeming the time from sleep is an 'important branch' of Christian temperance, whereas oversleep is a 'fashionable intemperance' that leads to other sins and to dullness (*Serm.* 93.II.8).

### 5.3.3.2 The Comprehensive Sense of Temperance

Like Calvin, Wesley appears to place 'practical' temperance under the larger category of self-denial – the reverse of the classical position. Yet – again like Calvin, Wesley supplements his more functional interpretations with a comprehensive model of

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<sup>530</sup> This concern found its way into the literature of the temperance movement. Monohan advises housekeepers to cook 'rationally and with a view to satisfy normal hunger and appetite, not to stimulate jaded palates or gorge extended stomachs' (150). This echoes the counsel of both Wesley and Aquinas against the cultivation of delicate appetites; see also 4.3.3.2 (B) above.

<sup>531</sup> Aquinas follows Gregory here (*Moral.* xxx.8).

temperance that recalls many of its classical themes. Wesley's explicit definition of temperance is found in his *Explanatory Notes* on Second Peter.

But see that *your* knowledge be attended with *temperance*. (a) Christian temperance implies the voluntary abstaining from all pleasure which does not lead to God. (b) It extends to all things inward and outward: the due government of every thought, as well as affection. (c) "It is using the world," so to use all outward, and so to restrain all inward things, (d) that they may become a means of what is spiritual; a scaling-ladder to ascend to what is above. (e) Intemperance is to abuse the world. He that uses anything below, looking no higher, and getting no further, is intemperate. (f) He that uses the creature only to attain to more of the Creator, is alone temperate, and walks as Christ himself walked. (*Expl.* 2 Pet 1.6)<sup>532</sup>

Several points of importance emerge here. First, temperance is 'voluntary'; it cannot be coerced and retain its essential nature. This implies a conscious choice to avoid those pleasures which are problematic for the *via salutis*. Second, it is quite broad in scope, extending to 'all things' both 'inward and outward.' Wesley follows both Augustine and Aquinas here, expanding the role of temperance beyond the merely physical to include thoughts and affections. Third, temperance has different roles for the 'inward' and outward' things. The rule for the outer things is *utility*; they are to be servants and not masters. Thus, intemperance is *abuse* rather than *use* of these things, another Augustinian echo.<sup>533</sup> The rule for the inward things is *control*; they (presumably, the affections, desires, and appetites) are to be held in check. This utility and restraint implies that the inner and outer things are means to an end, implements by which the believer continues the journey of *theosis*. The temperate person will recognize the opportunity, and the responsibility, to use the world to grow in holiness. They will model their conduct after that of Christ.

Temperance, therefore, is more than mere control, important though that may be. It is a disposition that is 'holy, heavenly, and divine' (*Serm.* 69). It is not narrow

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<sup>532</sup> Wesley follows the standard translation of temperance in the Authorized Version of the New Testament; that is, he translates 'temperance' from *enkrateia*.

<sup>533</sup> See 4.2.2.1 above.

in its sphere, but concerns itself with ‘all intemperate or immoderate desires, whether of honour, gain, or sensual pleasure’ (*Expl. Matt 23.25*); it ‘flows from love, peace, and joy’ (*Serm. 7.2.12*). It remains, fundamentally, a holy temper. As such, it stands ‘around the throne of love’ with several other tempers, whose company enhances and illuminates its nature. Notable among these are sobriety, meekness, and humility.

### **5.3.4 Associated Virtues**

Wesley has given some important jobs to temperance. It is surprising, therefore, that it does not make a larger impact on Wesley’s moral theology. One reason might be that Wesley, like so many good orators, was concerned with bringing a powerful message into each sermon, and the magnitude of his words on temperance were just so much rhetorical flourish. Equally likely, however, is that Wesley indicates the importance of temperance in the virtues with which it tends to appear. The most relevant of these are humility and sobriety.

#### **5.3.4.1 Humility**

Humility, which Wesley often identifies as ‘poverty of spirit,’ refers to ‘they who know themselves; who are convinced of sin; those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ’ (*Serm. 21.I.4*). Linked with temperance in 2 Pet 1.4-6, humility places knowledge in right relationship with the entire person: ‘The more knowledge you have, the more renounce your own will; indulge yourself the less. ‘Knowledge puffeth up,’ and the great boasters of knowledge (the Gnostics) were those that ‘turned the grace of God into wantonness. But see that your knowledge be attended with temperance’ (*Expl. 2 Pet 1.4-6*). When knowledge is attained and utilized temperately, the result is humility; it avoids that

knowledge that ‘puffeth up’ while simultaneously promoting self-denial. It is a ‘right judgment of ourselves’ that ‘cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfection from that undue opinion of our own abilities and attainments, which are the genuine fruit of a corrupted nature’ (*Serm.* 17.I.2). It fosters an awareness of internal and external sin and its consequences (*Serm.* 21.I.7). Thus, Wesleyan humility is a truthful self-knowledge that induces the believer to repentance, obedience and renunciation, echoing Augustine’s connection of humility to an awareness of human mortality and dependence upon God.<sup>534</sup> And in a cycle of reinforcement (perhaps a ‘virtuous circle’?), the pardoning of sin then yields ‘a deeper humility in the heart, and a stricter regulation in our words, in our actions, and in our sufferings’ (*Acct.* 11.2).

It is important to note that the status of humility as a ‘virtue’ is a matter of some debate.<sup>535</sup> Wesley himself seems not to regard humility as a virtue, lest the believer grow proud in its acquisition: ‘This some have monstrously styled, ‘the virtue of humility’; thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation!’ (*Serm.* 21.I.7). The concept of taking pride in acknowledging one’s sinfulness is abhorrent to Wesley. Instead, Wesley describes ‘true humility’ as ‘a kind of self-annihilation’, where one’s ego is minimized and God’s power is maximized (*Acct.* 11.2). Stephen Long describes Wesley’s view of humility as ‘emptiness.’<sup>536</sup> This makes any assessment of humility as a meta-virtue quite problematic, as ‘to make it the form of the virtues would be to welcome nihilism as the heart of the moral life.’<sup>537</sup> Yet Wesley himself designates humility ‘the centre of all virtues’ (*Acct.* 11.2). However, he intends a different meaning than Augustine’s centralizing of humility. Whereas for Augustine humility unites and indwells all the other virtues, Wesley sees it merely as

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<sup>534</sup> However, Augustine views humility more as a meta-virtue than a proto-virtue; see 4.2.2.3 above.

<sup>535</sup> This is discussed at some length in Lee-Koo, 110-5.

<sup>536</sup> Long, *Moral Theology*, 220.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*

‘the first step we take in running the race which is set before us’ (*Serm.* 21.I.7). Instead of a virtue *per se*, Wesleyan humility is ‘at most an entrance into virtue’, providing access for the believer yearning for sanctification.<sup>538</sup>

#### 5.3.4.2 Sobriety

Although meekness and humility feature more prominently than sobriety or temperance in Wesley’s moral thought, the latter two concepts are still quite central. Sobriety is not, for Wesley, the virtue opposed to drunkenness; rather, it is primarily an intellectual, rational state of being. In Acts 26.25, Paul is not mad with too much learning, but he ‘utters the words of truth and sobriety.’ Wesley says this sobriety is ‘the very reverse of madness... which remains even when the men of God act with the utmost vehemence’ (*Expl.* Acts 26.25). In ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm,’ religion is connected with a ‘sound mind’ and thus ‘stands in direct opposition to madness of every kind’ (*Serm.* 37.12). Sobriety, then, ‘governs our whole life according to true wisdom’ (*Expl.* 1 Tim.2.9). Indeed, in the Confession in the Book of Common Prayer, which Wesley would have known by heart, prays ‘that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name.’ Thus, sobriety is comparable in significance to godliness and righteousness, an association indicative of its importance.<sup>539</sup>

The connection between temperance and sobriety is highlighted by the fact that ‘sobriety’ is Wesley’s preferred translation of the New Testament occurrences of *sōphrosynē*, as the instances above. However, its fullest definition appearing in his commentary on Titus:

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<sup>538</sup> Long, *Moral Theology*, 220.

<sup>539</sup> I am grateful to Robert Song for this insight.

*Sobriety*, in the scripture sense, is rather the whole temper of a man, than a single virtue in him. It comprehends all that is opposite to the drowsiness of sin, the folly of ignorance, the unholiness of disordered passions. Sobriety is no less than all the powers of the soul being consistently and constantly awake, duly governed by heavenly prudence, and entirely conformable to holy affections. (*Expl.* Titus 2.12)

*Sōphrosynē* is, for Wesley, ‘the whole temper of a man’, serving in an architectonic sense that echoes continence in Augustine and moderation in Calvin (and, in a lesser sense, temperance for Socrates and Plato). It denotes an awareness and comprehension that can only come from sanctification, opposed as it is to sin, ignorance, and disordered passions. Interestingly, this is the same passage (Tit. 2.12) from which Calvin draws his comprehensive definition of temperance, further strengthening the connection between the two concepts.

### 5.3.5 Conclusions on Wesleyan Temperance

Although Wesley does not embrace the virtue tradition in the manner of Aquinas or Augustine, neither does he hold the fears about virtue harbored by Luther or (to a lesser extent) by Calvin. He speaks freely of ‘virtue’ and ‘happiness’, yet the categories are more scriptural than classical: the Aristotelian ‘dispositions’ have become holy tempers; happiness is inextricably paired with holiness; and humility and meekness are vanguards of his moral thought. He does not follow a strictly Platonic, Aristotelian, or Thomistic system or vocabulary; yet their disparate influences appear throughout his works. Moreover, his belief in the *imitatio Christi* and the Moravian admonition to ‘preach faith until you have it’ sound quite like the habituation of mimetic virtue.

Wesley does not prioritize temperance as a central virtue, as he does humility or meekness. Practically, it generally appears as a means to the end of self-denial that Wesley prizes so highly. As such, Wesley often expands the scope of the virtue to

various things that might prevent the believer from going on to perfection; drunkenness, gluttony and luxury, and sleep all fall in the sphere of temperance. It is, for Wesley, one of the tools in the toolkit of universal self-denial that Wesley finds so essential to the effective Christian life, in much the same way that it effects mortification for Calvin. It is this context that, as seen with continence for Augustine and with moderation for Calvin, temperance becomes something larger than the mere regulator of food, drink, and sex, and becomes ‘the due government of every thought, as well as affection’ (*Expl. 2 Pet 1.6*). Ultimately, temperance *is* more than a practical manner; it is, first and foremost, one of the holy tempers. As such, it is more important than works of piety or mercy, or even the gathering of the Church. This is a striking claim, given the strict, methodological importance Wesley assigned to these categories. Although he never makes mention of the shared etymology between temperance and the holy ‘tempers’, Wesley’s use of ‘tempers’ underscores two lesser-known glosses of temperance. The first is ‘temper’ as a state of mind in the sense of a disposition; the second is ‘tempering’ in the sense of something that strengthens or hardens the treated material. Taken together, and considering its close association with sobriety, these glosses echo the soundness of mind associated with the Greek *sōphrosynē* (with its translation as ‘sobriety’). His emphasis upon ‘heart religion’ and the heart as the seat of love might cause Wesley to replace ‘soundness of mind’ with ‘holiness of heart’, but the connection remains.

#### **5.4 Conclusions on Temperance During and After the Reformation**

Calvin and Wesley’s treatment of temperance reflects the significant changes in the status and employment of virtue in the language and theory of the post-Reformation Christian tradition. Like virtue more generally, temperance is both preserved and

transformed by its journey through and past the Reformation. Temperance retains its clear connection to the regulation of food, drink, and sexual activity, although Wesley adds sleep and clothing to the list of particulars. This regulation is generally framed negatively, as restraint, mortification, and self-denial. Yet both Calvin and Wesley bring more positive content to the practical functions of temperance as they utilize the philosophical and theological category of the ‘needs of this life’ and ‘the natural use of created goods, viewing them as things to be used but not abused. In these practical treatments, temperance closely resembles temperance throughout history, though without the positive content of pleasure exercise required by Aristotelian and Thomistic temperance.

More comprehensive themes also remain, although slightly altered in form. In a sense, the Reformation baptized some of the classical concepts attached to temperance. There are significant reflections of the classical theme of soundness of mind in both Calvin and Wesley. Responsible for ‘the due government of every thought’, temperance is again connected to the Socratic idea of ‘soundness of mind’. The association of sobriety with mindfulness and spiritual sentience in Wesley’s engagement with Titus 2.12 connects sobriety, via *sōphrosynē*, to this theme as well. This is reinforced by sobriety’s description as true wisdom, the opposite of folly, and even as a ‘sound mind’ itself. Calvin also recalls this classical understanding of temperance when he assigns it the function of ‘curing the whole understanding of man.’ Calvin also evokes the Aristotelian concept of temperance as ‘saving *phronēsis*’ when temperance preserves and ‘seasons’ the piety and righteousness of the believer.<sup>540</sup> These themes are somewhat altered from their classical constructions,

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<sup>540</sup> *Eth.Nic.* 1140b11-12; see 3.1.3.2 (A) above.



as for both Calvin and Wesley, reason as classically understood is present but dethroned; thus, religious values supplant the role of practical wisdom.

There are, however, two significant modifications to temperance *qua* virtue, the first being the relationship between temperance and several formerly secondary moral concepts. Whereas self-control used to be seconded to temperance as an inferior virtue, temperance is now seconded to such formerly lesser virtues as self-denial and mortification in service to them. Thus, temperance gradually assumes more of a utility role, functioning as the means to larger (as perceived) moral ends. The explicit status of temperance as a primary, ‘cardinal’ virtue has been lost, at least outside the Catholic Church. This relates directly to the second major modification of the virtue of temperance, which is the loss of the tetrad of cardinal virtues. The concept – even the virtue – of temperance has certainly not disappeared; it is still considered important in both practical and comprehensive ways. However, it is no longer *cardinal*; and it must reestablish itself within a changing moral system. In a sense, this loss of cardinality opens the door for temperance – for all its enduring comprehensive content – to be relegated to more functional concerns. As a rule, its focus is more *practical* and *pragmatic* than in previous treatments, which likely participates in the appropriation of temperance by the ‘temperance movements’ and the continued deterioration of its nature as a cardinal virtue.

## Chapter Six

### An Interpretation of the Virtue of Temperance

This study has devoted four chapters to the journey of temperance. Is it possible, or advisable, to attempt another chapter? The remainder of this thesis offers an affirmative answer to this question. Chapter Six undertakes an analysis and interpretation of five components found in the historical study, with an eye to constructing a new understanding of the virtue of temperance; it then examines several issues particular to this understanding. Chapter Seven applies this new interpretation of temperance to the contemporary issue of consumption and suggests some implications of this application. The breadth of material covered in the previous four chapters necessitates an overview, highlighting the study's central insights.

#### 6.1 A Summary of the Present Understanding of Temperance

Chapter Two examines the concept of temperance in the works of Plato. Platonic temperance possesses two primary levels of meaning, intellectual and moral. As an intellectual virtue, it represents the self-knowledge recommended by the oracle at Delphi. This self-knowledge is associated with an awareness of one's particular place in the *polis*, ideally resulting in behavior appropriate to one's social station. As a moral virtue, temperance connotes the restraint necessary to honorably uphold one's political station, eschewing all behavior which might bring *aidos* (shame) upon oneself. This self-restraint echoes the second Delphic maxim 'nothing in excess.' Thus, the primary moral significance of temperance is self-control. There is a third set of meanings embodied by temperance in the Platonic corpus, *kosmos* (order) and

*harmonia* (harmony), which displays an interesting blend of the first two domains. Where there is self-control informed by accurate self-knowledge, an internal order will exist in the body and the soul. Ideally, this order will present itself as a positive and pleasing harmony, like a beautiful piece of music. This harmony is constituted by the presence of the proper mixture of all components, observing a rational limit as determined by their due measure. This harmony also goes beyond the individual, as temperance is the virtue of the *polis* when all its members function with one harmonious accord.

Chapter Three examines temperance in the writings of Aristotle and the Stoics. Under Aristotle, temperance undergoes several significant changes that indicate both expansion and restriction of the virtue. First, it is demoted from ‘cardinal’ status by Aristotle’s dissolution of the Platonic tetrad, becoming another virtue alongside courage, generosity, *megalopsychia*, and others. However, it is expanded (albeit implicitly) through its inherent connection with the doctrine of the mean. Second, it loses the intellectual status it possessed under Plato when it is virtually limited to the physical pleasures of touch as embodied solely in food, drink, and sex. However, it is the virtue that ‘saves’ practical wisdom from the assaults of passion. Third, it is distinguished from continence (or self-control) in two complementary ways. Implicitly, it is characterized by pleasure attendant to the proper use of virtue; explicitly, it is differentiated from continence through the correlation of decision and desire. Lastly, as the ‘unnamed virtue’ related to *megalopsychia* and honor, it is implicitly connected with humility.

Under the Stoics, temperance regains its ‘cardinal’ status with the reinstatement of the tetrad. It is connected with the moral element of choice and is implicitly emphasized when self-control (*enkrateia*) enters the tetrad after practical wisdom is elevated to a meta-virtue. More importantly, it is the virtue more

responsible for attainment of the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. It is connected with self-control and orderliness, although on a smaller scale than in Plato. It is associated with propriety, decorum, and usefulness through its connection with the key Stoic concepts of *decorum* and *frugalitas*. Its translations as moderation (*moderatio*) and modesty (*modestia*) highlight its correlation to the concept of mode (*modus*), which is related to the mean.<sup>541</sup> Finally, its various interpretations as *temperantia*, *moderatio*, *modestia*, *continentia*, *abstinentia*, *sobrietas* and *castitas* reveal both the breadth of its Greek heritage, the difficulty of rendering these meanings in a new language and culture, and the directions in which it was pointed as it was sent out into the Roman (and Christian) world.

Chapter Four examines the journey of temperance in the writings of Augustine and Aquinas, when Christian moral theology was more explicitly in conversation with classical philosophy. Under Augustine, temperance retains its classical connections to restraint, measure, mode, and limit, but it receives entirely fresh content when virtue is defined as perfect love for God. In this paradigm, temperance is love keeping itself whole and incorrupt, given wholly over to the object of its love. This is accomplished by restraining corrupt desires and bringing them into accord with reason. Continenence, an associated virtue, retains its meaning as sexual abstinence; but its function expands dramatically, as it serves both as the conversional pivot of the *Confessions* and as the operative mode of Augustinian love. Augustine makes no evident distinction between the terms, although *temperantia* tends to appear in his more philosophical discussions.

For Aquinas, temperance serves the threefold function of restraining the passions when they exceed the bounds of reason, aligning with the needs (both physical and social) of this present life, and securing tranquility of the soul. However,

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<sup>541</sup> I will be discussing the concept of mode at greater depth later in this chapter; see 6.2.3 below.

it is considered a 'lesser' virtue, as it deals with the 'lowest' human concerns of physical self-preservation. In its explicit connections with meekness, clemency, modesty, and studiousness, its scope is broader than the Aristotelian account. However, it lacks the overall 'operative' function it possesses for Augustine, perhaps because Aquinas did not struggle with the sexual objects of temperance in the same manner. It is differentiated from self-control *per se*, as Aquinas retains the Aristotelian distinction between temperance and continence. Finally, it is explicitly connected to humility, as it restrains the movement of hope towards immoderate things.

Chapter Five considers temperance and related concepts in the works of John Calvin and John Wesley. Under Calvin, temperance stands in a curious place, central to his moral concerns yet overshadowed by its colleague, moderation. Temperance as such is limited in scope, connected with sobriety and the restraint of all physical desires. In this, it is essential to inner self-denial and bearing the cross, the dual commands of mortification. Moderation, however, is the goal of mortification and is the means of 'restoring order' in disordered humanity in a disordered world. It functions as a central concept in Calvin's moral thought, much like continence functions for Augustine; however, it lacks the positive connotation of healing found in Augustine with the negative connotation of restraint. Temperance is thus implicitly responsible for the moderation Calvin so often commands, as it enables this moderation and restores order.

For Wesley, temperance remains somewhat constricted in meaning, largely connected with sobriety and self-control in physical pleasures. However, as with Calvin, its connection with self-denial ties it to one of Wesley's largest moral concerns. More broadly, it is associated with meekness, humility and sobriety, central

concepts of Wesley's moral theology. This is an inverse echo of Aquinas, for whom temperance is the primary virtue and meekness and humility the subsidiaries. Temperance also continues to be associated with abstinence from alcohol.

This study now returns to its point of origin: temperance and its relationship to the temperance movements. As I will discuss more fully later in this chapter, temperance experienced two significant and lasting changes within the temperance movement: it was defined, for all intents and purposes, as abstinence from alcohol, and it was transformed from a *virtue* into a *practice* and a *movement*.<sup>542</sup> The concept of temperance as moderation in drinking is present but belongs to a dissenting minority voice. Its classical roots are appropriated in the debates, but rarely in a contextually correct fashion. 'Moderation in all things,' an unexciting connotation at best, now appears as the liberal, morally generous position. The journey of temperance comes to a rather screeching halt, as temperance becomes almost universally understood merely as abstinence from alcohol. The dynamic nature of the virtue of temperance is submerged beneath an outdated debate on alcohol consumption.

## **6.2 A Fresh Interpretation of the Virtue of Temperance**

Thus, the prevalent contemporary concept of temperance is drastically impoverished, confined largely to a general association with the Temperance Movement. Although there is a new interest in the virtue and several recent examinations of its importance and value,<sup>543</sup> temperance is still primarily understood as abstinence from alcohol (the narrow conception) and 'moderation-in-all-things' (the broad conception); and while the latter implies a broader range of application, it retains a decidedly negative or

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<sup>542</sup> See 6.3.2.1 below.

<sup>543</sup> See 1.1 above.

milquetoast connotation. The most common definitions for temperance remain ‘self-control’ and ‘moderation.’ ‘Self-control’ is an often explicit definition of temperance, particularly regarding the physical appetites; whereas ‘moderation-in-all-things’ is perhaps the more common, implicit understanding of temperance, especially as derived from the common conflation of the terms ‘temperance’ and ‘moderation.’

Both of these understandings contain elements of truth. Left to themselves, however, they rob the virtue of potential depth and fruitfulness. The vibrancy once attributed to temperance now resides in such virtues as humility or justice. Yet despite its tepid moral inheritance, there are hints of richer possibilities. The historical survey has uncovered several recurring shades of meaning: self-knowledge, self-control, moderation, restraint, mean, measure, limit, humility, order, and harmony. Such a variety of meanings is itself somewhat problematic; even as early as the *Charmides*, Socrates struggles with cohering a multiplicity of meanings for temperance which, while associated with temperance in one way or another, are ultimately discarded ‘as not touching the core of the matter.’<sup>544</sup> Ultimately, Plato’s concern is that this wealth of criteria for (and presentations of) the virtue of temperance indicate that what we have is not just one, but several different virtues.<sup>545</sup> Is it possible to discover within these concepts a fresh and cohesive approach to the virtue of temperance? Having undertaken a diachronic account of the virtue of temperance, this study now proposes an analytic account of the elements uncovered in the journey. Can these different elements, when considered together, yield a new and normative account of temperance, with the potential to serve as a lens into contemporary moral discourse?

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<sup>544</sup> Rademaker, 292.

<sup>545</sup> Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*, 42.

As stated earlier, one commentator noted the difficulty of tracing the continuities of ideas within Augustine's thought, owing to imprecise boundaries and shifting landmarks.<sup>546</sup> This also applies to temperance. The concept of this virtue undergoes many changes; the words themselves shift and are sometimes conflated. Moreover, the existing maps no longer seem adequate, as key components are often missing. Therefore, any new interpretation will need a new set of directions, a revised cartography, so to speak. This chapter will outline the need for this new cartography, identify the various elements present in the legend, and trace their interactions through a schematic that will display their interactions and respective relationships.

Throughout the tradition, people have identified various elements essential to the virtue of temperance, drawing their maps in ways that reflect their own moral priorities. Often, the results have been heavily weighted towards one or two particular components. The historical survey identified several central components of temperance, which may be grouped under the following categories: *self-control*, *knowledge*, *mode*, *humility*, and *harmonious order*. Each of these components contains elements of truth; each one has expressed, in some fundamental way, something of the *heart* of temperance, even if it fails to demonstrate its fullest meaning. This chapter proposes a fresh interpretation of the virtue of temperance as *harmonious order as constituted by the presence and interactions of self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility*. Each component will be considered in light of the following questions: What is this component of temperance? How is it morally formative? How is it associated with temperance? Are there significant biblical or theological considerations? Why is it incomplete on its own? How does it relate to the other components of temperance?

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<sup>546</sup> Babcock, 'Introduction', 6 (also, see 4.2.1.3 above).



In this examination of the virtue of temperance, a logical place to begin is with the definitions of virtue acquired through the historical survey. This cartography therefore begins with self-control, as it is one of the elements most commonly associated with the word ‘temperance.’

### 6.2.1 Self-Control

Associated with temperance since Plato, self-control is traditionally understood as the control of the appetites and desires that fight for continuous satisfaction and war against the dictates of reason. In his book *Reclaiming Virtue*, John Bradshaw describes something of a regulatory feedback loop between self-control and temperance, declaring that temperance ‘enhances our willpower’<sup>547</sup> but also that ‘willpower is the root of temperance.’<sup>548</sup> Thus, any attempt to discuss temperance and self-control with precision requires attending to their similarities and differences.

#### 6.2.1.1 The Moral Muscle

Self-control is essential to a temperate life because, quite frankly, it is difficult for human beings to perfectly integrate their appetites and desires. One study declares that ‘improving willpower is the surest way to a better life’ and that ‘most major problems, personal and social, center on failure of self-control.’<sup>549</sup> Characterized by another as ‘the moral muscle’, self-control provides persons with ‘a robust capacity to do what it takes so to conduct themselves in the face of (actual or anticipated)

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<sup>547</sup> John Bradshaw, *Reclaiming Virtue: How We Can Develop the Moral Intelligence to Do the Right Thing at the Right Time for the Right Reason* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2009), 44.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 180; see also 200.

<sup>549</sup> R. F. Baumeister and John Tierney, *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 2.

competing motivation.’<sup>550</sup> The concept of competing motivations is informative, as the exercise of reason might ensure a happy and flourishing life if humanity was purely rational. However, human beings are creatures of appetite – physical appetites, emotional appetites, intellectual appetites. Generation and consumption are the two activities most central to the maintenance of human life; their drives are understandably strong. Moreover, within a Christian anthropology, these appetites and desires (while God-given and *tov*, ‘good’) are nevertheless part of humanity’s fallen and sinful nature. These appetites need not be depicted as base or harmful to be recognized as in need of guidance – and when guidance fails, in need of occasional control.

This ‘reading’ of temperance as strict self-control has not fallen out of favor; Western culture in general (and American culture in particular) tends to valorize effort and struggle in matters of morality.<sup>551</sup> Yet the possession of notable self-control is not necessarily related to the other elements of temperance. Aristotle’s discussion of self-control and resistance reveals that there are some persons who are naturally gifted at holding out against adverse pleasures; they are more ‘resistant’ to the ‘pain’ of unfulfilled desires than the average person. This is associated not with the cultivation of any moral virtue, but is simply a result of one’s particular personality and nature: some persons are more physically muscular than others, some are more emotionally controlled. This ‘resistance’, while certainly helpful in many aspects of life, is not necessarily commendable in itself. Alfred Mele’s account of ‘brute resistance’, or the use of ‘sheer force of will’ to resist temptation, parallels the function of pure physical

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<sup>550</sup> R.F. Baumeister and Julia J. Exline, (1999), ‘Virtue, Personality, and Social Relations: Self-Control as the Moral Muscle’, *Journal of Personality*, 1165–1194 (67).

<sup>551</sup> Porter, *Recovery*, 112.

strength.<sup>552</sup> This resembles Aristotle's resistance, both literally and figuratively. Additionally, Aristotle understood that people who were excessively self-controlled were not virtuous; they were merely stubborn. In calling them opinionated and uneducated, he highlights the failure of isolated, excessive self-control to act in accordance with a responsive, pliable self. Self-control is necessary, but not sufficient, for a flourishing moral life.

Thus, the idolatry of self-control is as unattractive as it is inadequate, resulting in such imbalanced accounts of temperance as its reduction to total abstinence from alcohol and the denigration of pleasures in totality. *The New Temperance* explicitly equates temperance with sobriety, Puritanism, and 'warnings about life's many risks and dangers.'<sup>553</sup> Moreover, the sheer and unaided exercise of self-control is not particularly effective. A 2010 study in *Psychological Science* studied the impact of discrete acts of self-control upon their subsequent ability to accomplish demanding tasks.<sup>554</sup> The first half of the dogs were required to hold a 'sit and stay' position in isolation for ten minutes, while the second half (the control set) were placed in a cage and left alone for ten minutes. Thus, while both sets of dogs remained stationary, only the first set did so as an act of self-control. After being released, both sets were given an unsolvable task and their persistence was measured. Those in the control set persisted almost three times as long as the self-control set. Not surprisingly, the study concluded that alongside its many benefits, exercising self-control 'involves substantial costs.'<sup>555</sup> It can even be dangerous, as the apostle Paul noted in his instructions to the Corinthians to moderate their periods of celibacy lest they be

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<sup>552</sup> Alfred Mele, *Autonomous Agents: From Self-Control to Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 31.

<sup>553</sup> Wagner, 4-5.

<sup>554</sup> Holly C. Miller, Kristina F. Pattison, C. Nathan DeWall, Rebecca Rayburn-Reeves and Thomas R. Zentall, 'Self-Control Without a 'Self'? Common Self-Control Processes in Humans and Dogs' *Psychological Science* 21:4 (2010), 534-8.

<sup>555</sup> Miller *et al.*, 537.

caught unawares and vulnerable to temptation (1 Cor. 7:5). Paul reminds the church in Corinth that their practice of sexual abstinence is not for its own sake, but for devotion to prayer. Their continence gains proper meaning only when connected to its immediate purpose, and within the context of its larger purpose, the holistic Christian life.

Finally, a sole reliance upon self-control does not yield a particularly fulfilling or happy life. Aristotle's definition of self-control as internal struggle is no doubt accurate and applicable to everyone from time to time, but it is neither enjoyable nor sustainable as a state of being. Self-control, although necessary, is not designed as an end in itself, and unmitigated use of it is not appropriate to the human *telos*. The point is not to work as hard as you can or be as miserable as possible; the point is to live the good and blessed life that reflects the goodness and blessedness of the creator God. Moreover, our appetites need not be, as they were for the Greeks, of a lower nature than our reason. Appetites are important; they were implanted in us to recognize the need for that which sustains and fulfills us, to alert us to the presence of these needs, and to encourage us to address their fulfillment. This is a healthy, wholesome, God-ordained state of affairs, and self-control does not seek to change this situation in any fundamental way. It merely acts in a supportive capacity when desire threatens to overwhelm practical reason. Rather than an authoritarian and tyrannical regime, self-control is part of a concerted effort to live according to the dictates of temperance.

#### **6.2.1.2 The 'Tempering' of Self-Control**

If self-control is inadequate on its own, what are its necessary complements? As noted above, self-control is the 'muscle' by which the decisions of the self are

actualized. When knowledge informs me that such-and-such a situation is not helpful to me in the long run, self-control helps me to stick to that decision. Thus, self-control both shapes and reflects the knowledge component of temperance. Self-control may also be the mechanism for greater growth in knowledge. One example of this is the tendency of alcoholism and other addictions to arrest emotional development at the point when addiction begins, as the soporific effects halt the addict's level of internal awareness.<sup>556</sup> The journey of recovery is simultaneously a journey of self-discovery and internal growth.

Knowledge and the emotions it generates are powerful motivators for the practice of self-control. In 2005, I toured an area of eastern Kentucky that had been ravaged by the side effects of mountaintop removal coal mining. Seeing the scarred mountainsides, watching residents haul water for washing and drinking from miles away – receiving this knowledge and meditating upon it has given me a strong reminder of the reason to be frugal with electricity. To see firsthand the effects of energy consumption is to receive a powerful motivation to exercise phronetic self-control. Moreover, this emotional motivation actually eases the internal ‘cost’ of exercising restraint, as does the exercise of personal choice.<sup>557</sup> When people ‘are treated like cogs, rather than people’, they are emotionally disinclined to exercise restraint.<sup>558</sup> However, the internalization and personalization of the motivations for self-control do not argue against the necessity of its habituation; quite the opposite. Habituation is one of the most effective components of self-control, because it makes the desired actions almost automatic and thus reduces the internal stress that

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<sup>556</sup> One example of this research is Richard J. Rose, Torsten Winter, Richard J. Viken, and Jaakko Kaprio, ‘Adolescent Alcohol Abuse and Adverse Adult Outcomes: Evaluating Confounds with Drinking-Discordant Twins’, *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* 38 (2014), 2314-21.

<sup>557</sup> Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* (New York: Random House, 2012), 150.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

accompanies the internal ‘control’.<sup>559</sup> This should not be surprising, as the phenomenon he describes is what Aristotle would label the mature virtue of temperance (*Eth.Nic.* 1148a14-17,1152a1).<sup>560</sup>

The presence of humility can ‘temper’ the striving of the self-controlled. As noted above, the development and possession of self-control is *both* under one’s control *and also* a product of one’s individual makeup, as certain persons can and do excel in exercising restraint of all kinds. This component of temperance may also be more obviously manifest in certain lives and vocations. The professional dancer will need to practice considerably more discipline in her diet and exercise than the college professor. The professional counselor will need to moderate her emotions in response to her clients; the policeman and the soldier will need to control their tempers and their powers. These are all powerful examples of the effect of focused self-regulation. However, such discipline can easily run to improper pride and hubristic vanity. Baumeister and Tierney begin their ‘Willpower 101’ with “Know Your Limits.”<sup>561</sup> Personal limits – and our personal knowledge of them – not only inform where self-control should begin; they also point to the boundaries of the role of self-control. We require self-control because we are not fully integrated beings; yet we cannot rely fully on self-control because our strength is finite and our willpower often unreliable. Our need for control points to our humanity, and our humanity reveals the inadequacy of our control. Therefore, self-control both requires and generates humility.

When self-control exists within a network of interrelated qualities (such as knowledge, humility, and modal limits), it blossoms into its intended and mature role, aiding and assisting the human person in their commitment to an intentional and integrated life. And yet, the central function point of self-control is not to render its

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<sup>559</sup> Duhigg, 131.

<sup>560</sup> See 3.1.2.3 and 3.1.3.2 (C) above.

<sup>561</sup> Baumeister and Tierney, 243.

possessor more ‘productive.’<sup>562</sup> Rather, it enables us to enjoy life in a holy and holistic manner. Mele insists that the essence of this ‘moral muscle’ is not simply a ‘mental analogue of brute physical strength.’ Deliberation, recognition of future rewards, and a phronetic ability to discern the particulars of a situation all play a role in the successful use of self-control.<sup>563</sup> As stated earlier, this sounds like temperance, not self-control. For the moral agent to travel from self-control to true temperance, other factors must be included; and the reliance of self-control upon deliberation and phronetic ability indicate that the next component of temperance is *knowledge*.

### 6.2.2 Knowledge

Some thinkers, such as Aristotle and Aquinas, associate temperance with the appetites humanity shares with other animals.<sup>564</sup> In contrast, the categories of knowledge in classical thought – *technē*, *epistēmē*, *sophia*, and *phronesis* – represented the quality that elevates humanity above the animals and expressed the particular human capacities. However, this study has demonstrated the deep connections between the two concepts. In Plato’s *Charmides*, temperance is understood precisely as various types of (self-)knowledge. For Aristotle, temperance sustains our ability to choose well, ‘saving *phronēsis*’ from the assaults of appetite and passion. The early Stoics defined temperance as ‘*phronēsis* in choosing’, the practical ability to make the right choice. Augustine and Aquinas relate accurate self-knowledge to humility and duly proportioned living, while Calvin states that holy and appropriate sexual control is only possible through accurate self-knowledge. Finally, Wesley recommends temperance as a necessary partner to knowledge, fostering humility and preventing hubris. Thus, their somewhat reciprocal relationship falls primarily into two

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<sup>562</sup> Baumeister and Tierney, 259.

<sup>563</sup> Mele, 82 (in direct contrast to the idea of ‘brute resistance’).

<sup>564</sup> See 3.1.3.1 and 4.3.3 above.

categories: temperance as self-knowledge and the role of temperance in making phronetic choices.

### **6.2.2.1 Self-Knowledge**

The *Charmides*, Plato's most focused treatise on temperance, opens with a reference to the Delphic maxim 'Know thyself' (and names Socrates as its exemplar). The nature of this self-knowledge is dynamic and voluntary, a *habitus* wherein one's actions reveal one's sense of themselves. It functions something like, 'Recognize oneself, and act accordingly.' Socrates also emphasizes that true self-knowledge should yield moral insight; if someone possesses a virtue, they should realize it and be able to explain it.

Temperate self-knowledge also presupposes insight, not only into the presence or absence of some particular virtue, but insight into the moral life itself. Socrates, upon first hearing of the beautiful Charmides, asks who he is and to whom he belongs. Attention is now focused upon the issues of self-identity, one's *particular position* – who one is and who one is becoming. Moreover, this self-knowledge goes beyond the 'self.' Socrates' questions about the identity of Charmides concern more than his individual person; they highlight the nature of his existence as imbedded within the social networks and mores of his time. His identity and his moral journey occur within a particular context.

This framework is also present in scripture, with its questions 'who is the believer?' and 'to whom do they belong?' The biblical narrative is arguably one long story about a group of tribes learning how to be the people of God. Yet they are not just any people; they are creations of the living God, redeemed and gathered by him and called to reveal his character in their lives. The Israelites are constantly reminded



of the nature of the God whom they follow; the Pentateuch is replete with reminders that they follow the Lord God, ‘who brought you out of Egypt’. In the New Testament, the epistles preface their moral exhortations with accounts of God’s saving work in Christ Jesus and the saints’ relationship to him. Accurate self-knowledge comes not solely from introspection or dialogue, not even from a shared life, but from a relationship – and the knowledge of it – with the living God. Augustine recognized the importance of this particular self-knowledge. Indeed, the central point of the *Confessions* is that God actually does know Augustine, but Augustine does not know himself. Moreover, he will not know himself, truly, until he sees himself in relationship with God.<sup>565</sup>

Transitioning into the Christian tradition, it is important to note the shift in terminology and category. Instead of *phronesis* and *sophia*, the concept most frequently employed by New Testament authors is *epignōsis*, which connotes a concrete, ‘decisive’ knowledge that implies a necessary or inevitable confrontation with the change necessitated by an encounter with that knowledge. Thus, ‘knowing’ in the Judeo-Christian tradition primarily means knowing that you are not God, a connotation present but not always emphasized in the classical position. Knowledge is not a personal advantage, indicative of merit; it is an awareness of the decidedly tenuous nature of one’s spiritual situation. The knowledge appropriate to temperance will be provisional and imperfect. Moreover, it cannot be possessed or manipulated. We do not grasp the Whole; we *are grasped* by it. We do not possess full knowledge; we *are possessed* by the One in whom and from whom knowledge receives its context and meaning.

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<sup>565</sup> Robert Dodaro, ‘Loose Canons: Augustine and Derrida on Their Selves,’ in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael Scanlon (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 79-111 (83).

What other things are encompassed within self-knowledge? In order to choose well, we need accurate knowledge of our *particular needs*. Aristotle's Milo the wrestler needs more food than someone who is sedentary, and a Montana farmer has an actual need for a four-wheel drive vehicle, as opposed to someone in Florida who just likes the prestige of driving one. One could reasonably ask at this point, 'What exactly *are* someone's needs?' It is helpful here to remember Aquinas' criterion of 'the needs of this life', which encompass both the actual physical needs and those suitable to one's station in life. Although this may smack of hierarchical, class-related luxuries being 'baptized' into appropriateness, there are other ways to read Aquinas on this matter. Persons who are committed to an active ministry of hospitality may legitimately need a house with an extra bedroom or a spacious living area in which to entertain neighborhood children.

This dovetails with the knowledge of our *particular strengths and abilities*. For Calvin, human self-knowledge is tied to our knowledge of the divine, as revealed in the Torah (particularly the Decalogue), the gospels, and the epistles. Yet there is also an element of almost 'phronetic' awareness, 'a general appropriateness that philosophers look upon as an aspect of moderation.' He continues, 'But there is also an individual appropriateness, because what is suitable for one person may be quite unsuitable for another. Therefore every individual ought to know what kind of character God has given him' (*Inst.* III.10.7). Implied herein is the knowledge of one's *particular limits*. An important aspect of choosing well is an awareness of when one has had enough. One person may handle a few drinks with ease, whereas others must be cautious with a small glass of wine. This type of awareness is not only rational in the classical sense. Coupled to any cognitive speculation is a variety of somatic information acquired through physical experience.

### 6.2.2.2 Bodily Knowledge – Desire as Information

Although the traditions are strong in their view of desires, particularly physical desires, as inflammatory and destructive, this need not be the case. Physical desire can act as a purveyor and conductor of information, particularly when partnered with other kinds of knowledge. Physical sensation is part of created human nature and should not be eschewed. Paul Brand, the surgeon who pioneered reparative hand surgery among sufferers of Hansen’s disease in India, stressed the important and protective role of pain in daily life.<sup>566</sup>

What has been lost in contemporary culture is the idea of desire, appetite, and sensation as natural information. Hunger is supposed to tell us when to eat; no more, no less. It is an organic, integrated reminder of the reality of our limits *and* our needs. People must eat, but they should not eat too much; both starvation and gluttony produce discomfort and indicate that something is amiss. Taking a position somewhat counter to classical philosophy and theology, André Comte-Sponville astutely notes,

It is not the body that is insatiable. The limitlessness of desire, which condemns us to neediness, dissatisfaction, or unhappiness, is a disease of the imagination. We have dreams that are greater than our stomachs, and foolishly we reproach our stomachs for being small!<sup>567</sup>

Allowing one’s physical body to return and explore their states of hunger provides valuable information on the healthy, temperate enjoyment of God’s created goodness.

Moreover, all knowledge must be integrated to be useful.

The man or woman who knows what is good can only be one whose character has taken on the pattern of the virtues. We may depend upon such a person to enact the good he or she sees precisely because this seeing has not from the outset been a purely intellectual undertaking. Only those whose desires, passions, and emotions have been properly molded can see.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Paul Brand, *The Gift of Pain* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan Press, 1997).

<sup>567</sup> Comte-Sponville, 40.

<sup>568</sup> Gilbert C. Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 61-2.

This knowledge is neither disconnected nor intellectual; it is truly phronetic, with profoundly practical implications.

### **6.2.2.3 Knowledge in the Balance**

Like self-control, knowledge functions best when interactive with the other components of temperance. Knowledge of all types is informative. Through it, one gains information about oneself, others, the world, and God. This knowledge helps us to both recognize the importance of limits and to make good assessments regarding our limits and the world's limits of the rest of the created order. There is thus a causal connection between knowledge and a measured mode, as knowledge helps provide the information necessary to discern the proper measure or method of our appetites and choices. Conversely, in his commentary on Romans 12.3, Brendan Byrne notes that the phrase *emerisen metron* (literally 'allots a measure') is 'the true basis for self-judgment.'<sup>569</sup>

Moreover, accurate self-knowledge – an awareness and acceptance of our own frailties and failures – leads to a posture of humility: the knowledge of *what* one does and does not know and the recognition *that* one does and does not know. Knowledge of one's limits and the corresponding necessary measure reveals the need to practice self-control, which both requires and generates humility. Humility bids us remember that the knowledge appropriate to temperance will always be provisional and imperfect. Finally, the very difficulty of developing virtue engenders humility in those who truly understand themselves. Moral philosopher Iris Murdoch, who ranked humility as one of the most important human goods, acknowledges the active and

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<sup>569</sup> Brendan Byrne, S.J., *Romans*, vol. 6 of *Sacra Pagina*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 368.

arduous nature of opening oneself to reality; it is, she states, ‘a *task* to come to see the world as it is.’<sup>570</sup>

With self-control and self-knowledge, the virtuous and temperate person should have the ability to formulate a virtuous and temperate manner of life, or as Aristotle would say, ‘the *metrios* as the *phronimos* would determine it’ (*Eth.Nic.*1107a1-2). How such a life would actually look is the subject of the next component of temperance, the *mode*.

### 6.2.3 Mode

From Aristotle we have: ‘Virtue, then,’ he says, ‘is a disposition issuing in decisions, depending on intermediacy of the kind relative to us, this being determined by rational prescription and in the way in which the wise person would determine it’ (*Eth.Nic.*1106b36-1107a2). He later shortens this definition, saying, ‘Virtue is a kind of mean, as it aims at what is intermediate’ (*Eth.Nic.*1103b21), a position shared by Aquinas (I-II.59.1). Thus, a general assumption is that all virtue, temperance included, is some form of a mean. Yet does this assumption hold true?

#### 6.2.3.1 The Difficulty with the Mean

As discussed above, the well-known ‘doctrine of the mean’ has received much discussion in philosophical commentary. However, this study has called its efficacy into question, wondering if the doctrine of the mean is not, in fact, unhelpful on several levels.<sup>571</sup> To my reading, the doctrine of the mean is problematic in that it is *ambiguous* and *misleading*.

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<sup>570</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [1971] (London: Routledge, 2001), 89.

<sup>571</sup> See 3.1.4.3 above.

First, it is ambiguous on several levels. For example, the standard reading of the doctrine of the mean as a mean disposition *towards feelings*, as opposed to a disposition to *feeling moderately*, is difficult to interpret practically. One commentator admits, ‘How to utilize the doctrine of the mean is not obvious. The doctrine certainly does not state, “Be moderately afraid, moderately angry, etc. all of the time, and act that way”.’<sup>572</sup> This interpretation does not improve our understanding of the virtuous life; it appears merely to substitute one imprecise idea for another. Faced with the problems named above, this commentator offers a ‘more plausible suggestion,’ wherein the doctrine of the mean means ‘triangulating in on the right choice’: ‘In scary situations, first determine the range of possible fear. Then arrange to feel medial fear for that range. Then act accordingly.’<sup>573</sup> This is a tiresome process and, again, one wonders whether the decision to ‘feel medial fear’ is any more accurate than ‘be moderately afraid.’

Second, and more problematic, the concept of the mean is misleading in its single clear connotation, which is a strong connection to the idea of numerical moderation. This connection engenders the awkward (and illogical) position of having merely moderate feelings and reactions. This association leads to platitudes such as ‘always respond moderately’ and ‘everything in moderation’, which in actuality do little to facilitate moral reasoning. Thus, the doctrine of the mean is well-intentioned, but largely unhelpful. Despite its prominence, it may actually create more confusion than it resolves.

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<sup>572</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 51.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

### 6.2.3.2 Mean, Median, Mode

The definitions of the relevant terms also shed light into the potential difficulties of imprecise terminology. As discussed, *mean* is the term most commonly associated both with virtue in general and temperance in particular; however, its precise definitions shed considerable light on its problematic nature for this discussion (RW). It is defined as an ‘average’; a ‘quotient of a sum of several quantities and their number’; ‘a quality, condition, or course of action equally removed from two opposite (usually unsatisfactory) extremes.’ Another particular problem is the conflation, common in discussions of the doctrine of the mean, of the terms *mean* and *medial* (from the Latin *medius*, ‘middle of’). While they are often used interchangeably,<sup>574</sup> these terms represent distinctly different mathematical concepts; whereas the *mean* of a mathematical sample is its average, the *median* is the value residing mathematically at the midpoint of that sample. However, as both terms connote the ‘middleness’ of the choice, they are equally unhelpful. Fortunately, one helpful option is available, the *mode*.

From the Latin *modus*, meaning ‘measure’, mode contains a variety of meanings which illuminate our discussion. Mode is defined as ‘a way or manner in which something occurs or is experienced, expressed, or done.’ The mode signifies the way something most expressly *is*, something about the essence of its nature. Interestingly, this understanding of mode is enhanced by its mathematical definition, ‘the value that occurs most frequently in a given set of data.’ This gives a similar but much more illuminating insight into the action of the mode; whereas the *mean* is an average of all actions in a set, whether large or small, timid or grandiose, the *mode* is the most frequent result, revealed in a manner that highlights its frequency (and thus

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<sup>574</sup> See Curzer, *Virtues*, 51; Curzer, ‘Mean’, 130-2.

its significance) yet also retains the radical nature of the extreme, outlying responses. These extremes are present and acknowledged, but quite clearly do not dominate the set as does the mode. The mode is the most *commonly performed action*, the *most standard manner of response* to a given situation. Thus, the third component of temperance is better understood as *mode* than as *mean*.

### 6.2.3.3 The Fourfold Significance of the Mode

The semantic family *modus* is present within the journey of temperance, even without the prioritization of the concept of the mode.<sup>575</sup> However, it has been difficult to elucidate its etymological richness. In his recent work on the causes of virtue in Aquinas, Nick Austin discerns an excellent fourfold categorization for the Thomistic concept of mode. Following Austin, the mode may be understood as *measure*, *method*, *limit*, and *proportion to the end*.<sup>576</sup> Furthermore, they may be extrapolated beyond a Thomistic application and applied across the larger history of temperance. The first connotation of mode is mode as *measure*.

#### A) Measure

Measure (*metron/mensura*) is a term of rich meaning both in classical, biblical, and theological thought. In addition to ‘measure’, ‘proportion’, ‘order’, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* defines *metron* primarily as ‘a criterion or standard’ and ‘the resulting due measure.’<sup>577</sup> Measure expresses the diversity and manifoldness of the gifts of grace allotted to each person within the body of Christ (Eph 4.7, 16;

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<sup>575</sup> See 3.2.5.3 above.

<sup>576</sup> Austin, ‘Four Causes’, 35. This study will not follow Austin’s particular Thomistic foundations of these four categories, but it finds that the categories themselves encompass so many of the nuances of this aspect of temperance that they warrant adoption in their own right.

<sup>577</sup> Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 632.



Rom 12.3). The language of measure appears three times in Romans 12.3 alone, where it indicates the *particular* and *proper* function of each member of the body of believers: ‘as each part is working properly... according to the working in the measure of each single part... according to the powers which correspond to the measure of each part.’ Within the body of Christ, this measure of faith is given by God, who himself determines and assigns the *metron*. This highlights the second significance of biblical measure: the ultimate source of proper measure is God. Humanity is not to judge and set its own measure (Matt 7.2) because this measure is established by God himself (Rom 12. 3; cf. 2 Cor 10.13).

This connection is also found throughout classical philosophy and theology. Plato declared that the wisdom of the few will measure and direct the desires of the many (*Rep.* 431e). He later calls the soul ‘a mixture and harmony of those things, when they are mixed with each other rightly and in due measure (*metron*)’ (*Phdo.* 86c). He also stated that an absolute measure is found only in God (*Leg.* IV, 716c) who is the measure of all things (*Laws* 716c-d). Indeed, Aristotle’s broad position that virtue is normed by the actions of virtuous moral agents has been called ‘his *virtue-is-the-measure* doctrine.’<sup>578</sup> Augustine describes virtue as synonymous with moderation and a ‘just measure of the soul’ (*beata u.* 4.33). Moreover, temperance has been called ‘a kind of moral measure, designed to stabilize the harmony of a healthy life’ which ‘served to keep the parts adjusted to each other.’<sup>579</sup> Thus, measure particularly expresses that aspect of temperance that is concerned with order, proportionality, and cooperative functioning.

Because human beings are both animal and rational, it can be difficult to discern the ‘rule and standard’ for human life, the prototype for human existence and

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<sup>578</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 20.

<sup>579</sup> Snell, 184.

living. The concept of measure helps connect humanity with this rule and standard for both its giftings and its very existence. The measure is established by God and should be respected; thus, the believers are contrasted those who go ‘beyond measure’ (Rom 12.3). This points to the second connotation of mode, the mode as *limit*.

## **B) Limit**

If something is designed to measure, then there is a point beyond which it should not go; it implicitly (or explicitly) involves a *limit*, a regulating factor. Illustrated in the phrases ‘in due measure’ and ‘beyond due measure,’ limit is a reflection of the boundaries of the rule or standard. Limits both keep us from the dangers of excess and create an atmosphere of safety and trust. Roadways are assigned speed limits, designed to prevent accidents; elevators display a weight limit, beyond which the supporting cables lose their integrity. Such limits are not arbitrary; speed limits are determined by several factors such as the presence of pedestrians and the isolation of the road. They exist to provide a safe space in which life may occur. Indeed, creation by design is limited. The waters are separated from the earth, the heavens separated from the earth; the waters are separated from dry land. Days and nights follow a set time, as do the seasons. In addition to establishing a measure for our lives, God has established limits upon them. God limits our lifespans (Gen 6.3); he limits the endeavors at Babel by limiting those with whom they could communicate (Gen 11.5-9). Even within the New Testament catalogues of spiritual giftings, all the gifts have a measure and a limit (Rom. 12.3-6).<sup>580</sup>

Even in the Garden of Eden, man and woman received instructions on their limits; indeed, it can be argued that the original sin was nothing more than a

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<sup>580</sup> Kittel, 634.

transgression of physical and metaphysical limits. In pre-Platonic epics, temperance stood against the forsaking of limits and the increase of *hubris*.<sup>581</sup> Furthermore, limits do not exist merely for their own sake. Speed limits serve the larger purpose of public safety and trust; similarly, human limits are designed to reorient humanity towards its proper end. Knowing the mode of our lives, knowing the particular manner in which we are to live, knowing that we are not God, helps humanity to recognize its boundaries and its purpose. Thus, the recognition of limits signals the third connotation of mode, the mode as *proportion to the end*.

### **C) Proportion to the End**

Things possessing measure and limit do so because they are oriented to something beyond themselves. The spiritual gifts in Romans are given, not for their own possession, but for the greater glory of God and the increase of love and unity within the church. Therefore, to fulfill one's purpose, to work within the mode of humanity is to align oneself proportionately to one's final end.

The question may be asked: what is the purpose of humanity, its ultimate end? The Westminster Confession of Faith, and John Wesley, identify humanity's ultimate goal as the happiness and holiness of God. Therefore, the mode of human life is fashioned – is measured, if you will – upon the requirements of this ultimate end. If it does not serve the end, it does not align with the mode of humanity. However, Aquinas insightfully distinguishes between the proximate and final ends of humanity, so that we may orient ourselves accordingly.

The mode of humanity now contains measure, limit, and proportion to the end. The final step is to bring these components together into a cohesive and functioning

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<sup>581</sup> See North, 1-84.

whole. This cohesive whole, and the manner in which it functions, may be described as a method. Therefore, the fourth connotation of mode is mode as *method*.

#### **D) Method**

When oriented to the active moral life, the mode functions as a means of operation, as in the phrase *modus operandi*.<sup>582</sup> This is not unique to temperance, as all the virtues serve to accomplish larger moral objectives. However, this point is particularly significant for temperance, as it is often the manner in which comprehensive moral goals are realized. Plato conflates temperance with his two ‘architectonic’ virtues, justice (*Rep.* 431, 440) and wisdom (*Prot.* 333b, *Laws* 689d), indicating that, at times, it operates in a more universal manner than mere restraint of appetites.<sup>583</sup> Aristotle also employs temperance in a somewhat architectonic manner, as it underlies the doctrine of the mean.<sup>584</sup> To the Stoics, temperance is vital to the eradication of passions necessary in the journey to becoming a sage. For Augustine, continence (a close relative of temperance) is central both to conversion and to faithful Christian living; it is the ‘operative mode’ of Christian love.<sup>585</sup> For Calvin, moderation (another close relative of temperance) is one of the primary means of reestablishing means of living the Christian life. With its emphases upon the rule of life, the acceptance of limits, and a relationship to a *telos*, temperance aligns, closely and consistently, with the operations of the moral life. Whereas the mean is representative of a virtue by way of averages, the mode indicates virtue’s core tendencies. The centrality of the mean is *quantitative*; the centrality of the mode is *qualitative*.

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<sup>582</sup> Austin also connects the mode to method via *modus operandi*, drawing an analogy from Aquinas’ comments on the mode of a science (*Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 1 l. 3 n. 1) to the mode of a virtue (*Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 33 q. 3 a. 2 qc. 1 co.). However, he largely derives the mode of a virtue from its ‘matter’ (‘Four Causes’, 36-7). I do not make this derivation.

<sup>583</sup> See Rowe, ‘Republic’, 336-44.

<sup>584</sup> See North, 200, and 3.1.4.3 above.

<sup>585</sup> Schlabach, *Joy*, 58; see 4.2.5.3 above.

#### **6.2.3.4 The Mode in the Balance**

The mode is deeply shaped by the other components of temperance. Knowledge plays an especially pivotal role, as discerning the mode is much more phronetic than discerning the mean. While the mean lacks any clear or decisive content, arising from a somewhat ‘lazy’ knowledge, the mode relies upon a wider variety of knowledge than does the mean. Indeed, in one sense the mode is nothing less than applied practical reason. Moreover, the creation of measure and its limits requires good knowledge. Self-control is implicit in the various facets of the mode, particularly its function as limit. Conforming to a rule of life requires both humility and self-control. When the moral agent acknowledges the boundaries of limits, humility is required. Moreover, acting with proportion to a *telos* recognizes that the self is not the center of one’s moral universe, which fights against *hubris*.

As stated above, temperance is very often the manner in which comprehensive moral goals are realized, coordinating the actions of knowledge and self-control into a method of living into the moral life. However, to properly utilize the previous three components of temperance, one thing more must be considered, and that is humility.

### **6.2.4 Humility**

Humility is the fourth component of the virtue of temperance, and perhaps the most ambiguous. Is it a natural or a special virtue? Is it virtuous or vicious?<sup>586</sup>

#### **6.2.4.1 A Somewhat Ambiguous Virtue**

Accepted opinion within classical philosophy views humility as vicious; however, a deeper examination reveals a more nuanced position.<sup>587</sup> The meekness and openness

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<sup>586</sup> While this study will not attempt to absolutely defend the status of humility as virtuous, it will take the position that humility is beneficial and not inherently vicious.

to direction recommended in the *Laws* are positively connected to humility. Aristotle identifies humility with human lowliness which prevents man from achieving his potential, and views it as blameworthy and vicious; thus Aristotle's opposing humility to *megalopsychia* prevents his approval of the Christian construction of the virtue. Yet his description of a particular combination of being and mindset, which opposes hubris and excessive pride, suggests some version of humility, the 'unnamed virtue' which he calls temperance. Both Plato and Aristotle link temperance with a mindset that involves knowing one's social position, possessing an appropriate love of honor, and the recognition of man's mortal nature. Thus, while humility *per se* is never valorized in classical philosophy, it overlaps significantly with other 'virtuous' traits.

The Christian tradition has generally viewed humility as a virtue, though with varying particulars. For Augustine, humility is the 'first, second, and third way' of the Christian life (*ep.* 118.22), an awareness of humanity's need for God's grace (*s.* 137.4, 44) and a response to the very humility of Christ (*en. Ps.* 31.2.18).<sup>588</sup> Thus, Augustinian humility is something of a meta- or supernatural virtue, necessary for even the smallest advance in virtue and godliness. In contrast, Wesley, who consistently links temperance to humility, sees humility as a proto- or sub-virtue, an emptiness that exists prior to acquiring the virtues themselves, 'the first step we take in running the race which is set before us' (*SS* 21.I.7). Aquinas also sees humility as humanity's necessary subjection to God and natural consequence of its sinfulness (II-II.161.1). However, he then names humility as one of the potential parts of temperance, where it 'tempers' the natural appetite for honor (II-II.162). Thus,

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<sup>587</sup> For the accepted opinion, see MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (South Bend IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 136; Curzer, *Virtues*, 130-3. For my observations of nuance, see 2.5.4 and 3.1.3.2 (B) above. One difficulty is that 'humility' translates both *mikropsychia* and *tapeinosis*, so the definitions and contexts are not consistent.

<sup>588</sup> See also *conf.* 7.20.26.

humility is simultaneously meta-virtue and secondary-virtue, a confusing place to inhabit.

Humility may be considered a practice as well as a virtue. Benedict of Nursia describes the ‘ladder to humility’ with twelve degrees of ascension, which begin internally and proceed externally.<sup>589</sup> Although it begins by cultivating the internal realities of reverence, submission, endurance, and repentance, it presumes these realities are both shaped and reflected by external actions, wherein one is humble ‘not only in his heart, but also in his very outward appearance.’<sup>590</sup> In strikingly Aristotelian language, Benedict states that ascending this ladder of humility will change the monastic life from fearful obligation to joyful endeavor, now lived ‘naturally and by habit ...no longer through fear of hell, but the love of Christ and out of holy custom and delight in virtue.’<sup>591</sup> Whether sub- or meta-virtue, internal inclination or external practice, humility has consistently been regarded as central to the moral life. John Chrysostom, ‘For as pride is the fountain of all wickedness, so is humility the principle of all self-command’ (Homily XV.3).<sup>592</sup> Humility was a central virtue in rabbinic literature, the ‘head and front’ and ‘ingredient of all the virtues.’<sup>593</sup> C.S. Lewis considered humility ‘the centre of Christian morals’, opposed as it is to the principal sin of pride, and located in our self-knowledge as nothing before God.<sup>594</sup> Even modern moral philosophers have come to value this ‘humble’ trait; Iris Murdoch

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<sup>589</sup> *The Rule of Saint Benedict* [1937] (St. Meinrad IN: Grail Publications, 1956), 20.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, 26. While the addition of ‘the love of Christ’ marks this version of virtue as specifically Christian, it does not detract from the clear parallels with Aristotelian thought on virtue as a pleasurable habit.

<sup>592</sup> Philip Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 10 [1890] (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2014).

<sup>593</sup> Sol Roth, ‘Toward a Definition of Humility’, *Tradition* 13:4 (1973), 5-22 (17-20).

<sup>594</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [1952] (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 121.

calls humility a ‘selfless respect for reality and one of the most difficult and central of all the virtues.’<sup>595</sup>

In light of this array of accounts, it may seem redundant to ask: What is humility? Yet, despite its foundation within the different traditions, embodying this virtue is anything but simple. One helpful approach works from the connected Aristotelian categories of mindset and being.

#### **6.2.4.2 The Nature of Humility – Mindset and Being**

In his discussion of *megalopsychia* and *mikropsychia*, Aristotle states that the ‘unnamed virtue’ (which makes someone *sōphron*) is present in persons who are worthy of small (*mikrōn*) things *and* believe themselves worthy of them (1123b5-6). Thus, they align themselves with moderate, measured things in both *being* and *mindset*, categories which will guide this discussion of humility.

##### **(A) The Mindset of Humility: Self-Aware and Other-Centered**

The mindset of humility often appears wholly negative, such as its association with ‘humiliation’. This has its roots in the Hellenic connotations of *tapeinosis*, as well as certain examples of Christian thought; Anselm, for example, locates the entirety of humility in human contemptibility (*De Simil. ci, seqq.*)<sup>596</sup> However, humility is better understood not as self-hatred, but as true self-understanding. Augustine exhorts his congregation: ‘You are not being told, “Be something less than you are.” But “understand what you are. Understand that you’re weak, understand that you are merely human, understand that you are a sinner’ (s. 137.4). Instead of a gloomy humiliation, this is an acceptance of humanity’s fallen state and complete reliance

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<sup>595</sup> Murdoch, 93.

<sup>596</sup> Cited in *ST II-II* 161 a.6 *obj.* 3



upon the grace of God. This nuance of humility expresses some of the meaning of the Greek *sōphrosynē*: accepting human frailty and mortality, respecting limits, and avoiding *hubris*. Writing during ‘the most difficult period of his life’, Henri Nouwen managed to see the complex, interwoven nature of the way of humility in these disparate topics: ‘Acknowledge your powerlessness’, ‘See yourself truthfully’, ‘Accept your identity as a child of God’, ‘Know yourself as truly loved’, ‘Avoid all forms of self-rejection’, and ‘Say often, “Lord, have mercy.”’<sup>597</sup>

Because it is so easy to slide into the abyss of ‘humiliation’, genuine humility must arise from the right intentions. Dorothy Day maintained that unless humility is divinely motivated, it is only ‘a debasing and repulsive attitude.’<sup>598</sup> When divinely motivated, however, it is a basic attitude of heart that generates a quiet and unassuming joyfulness.

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call ‘humble’ nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody ... He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.<sup>599</sup>

The concluding phrase reveals the deeper reality of the mindset of humility. Beyond the work of a true self-understanding, humility moves our vision outward. The mindset of humility is a shift from self-regard, whether positive or negative, to a primary regard for others. Instead of promoting more self-reflection and narcissism, humility de-centers the self, facilitating an ‘other-centeredness’ that arises from true self-knowledge.<sup>600</sup> Indeed, humility is part of the recommended triad of acting justly and loving mercy, both of which focus upon our behavior towards others (Micah 6:8).

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<sup>597</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2006)

<sup>598</sup> Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), 97.

<sup>599</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 128.

<sup>600</sup> See Fullam.

Thus, humility is a virtue that refines and reorients vision; it affects not only how we see ourselves, but *how we see* – opening the eyes to the larger realities of the world. Murdoch maintains that humility ‘is not a peculiar habit of self-effacement’ but has far deeper significance; it is the ‘moral side-effect of being closer to the truth.’<sup>601</sup> This truth that is the second aspect of genuine humility: an acceptance of our particular state of being.

### **(B) The Being of Humility: Humus and Hubris**

Interestingly, the word humility is derived from *humus* (Latin for ‘ground’), the layer of topsoil that provides both fertility and stability to the soil system it overlays. True humility, therefore, is literally a state of being *grounded*, not *ground down*. It is an earthiness that roots us in the commonplace, keeping ‘our feet on the ground.’ One example of this ‘grounding’ is King Uzziah, described as righteous before the Lord, who tempered his military and civic achievements with a ‘love for the soil’ (2 Chr. 26.10). He sought the Lord and ‘was marvelously helped until he became strong’, whereupon ‘he grew proud, to his destruction’ (2 Chr. 26.15-16). He literally moved from *humus* to *hubris*. For his arrogance, he was stricken with leprosy and banished from the house of the Lord, a truly deep humiliation for the former king (2 Chr. 26.21). This arrogance is all too common today, as ‘the collective hubris of the West has allowed many humans to ignore their rootedness to the planet even as it has given them an arrogant sense of the power they wield over their own lives and the lives of other species.’<sup>602</sup> We forget the very things from which we derive our sustenance and strength, be it God or creation.

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<sup>601</sup> Murdoch, 93.

<sup>602</sup> Hans, 271.

As Augustine noted, humility rightly orders us to God (*s.* 137.44). When we accept that we are creatures and not the Creator, we can embrace our limitations as finite beings. ‘There is no task more difficult,’ states Norman Wirzba, ‘than to be faithful and true to our creaturely condition and need,’ and failure to do so signals a ‘rebellion against humility.’<sup>603</sup> Humility is tenacious, reminding us that small, everyday efforts are not to be despised: it ‘does not mind if it looks silly; it does what it can.’<sup>604</sup> Instead of expressing docility or folly, it possesses a toughness and realism unexpected in our modern rendering of ‘humiliation.’<sup>605</sup> This realism and durable meekness are evidenced in the humility of the kenotic action of Christ:

Let the same mind be in you, that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. (Phil. 2.3-6)

This humility is in stark contrast to the honor of Aristotle’s *megalopsychoi*. While Aquinas connects the virtues of humility and magnanimity, humility can also provide an alternative to the myth of heroic virtue, guarding against the discouragement of ‘failing at “heroic” tasks.’<sup>606</sup> Thus, humility serves well as a weapon against despair. This is especially true as we live alongside the ‘creation myths’ of our faith story, whose example we may despair of ever matching.

Moreover, humanity, like all creation, lives in a post-lapsarian state in the midst of a process of redemption. At its core, humility is the embodied acknowledgement that both creatureliness and failure are part of the present human condition. However, this does not lead to a passive acceptance of our sinful nature;

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<sup>603</sup> Norman Wirzba, ‘The Touch of Humility: An Invitation to Creatureliness’, *Modern Theology* 24:2 (2008), 225-42 (225-6).

<sup>604</sup> Roberta C. Bondi, ‘Humility: A Meditation on an Ancient Virtue for Modern Christians’, *Quarterly Review* 3:4 (1983), 27-41 (39).

<sup>605</sup> D. Stephen Long, ‘Humility as a Violent Vice’, *Studies in Christian Ethics* 12:2 (1999), 31-46 (13).

<sup>606</sup> Bondi, 31-2.

rather, it makes space for the possibility of transformation. Humility enables the recognition and acceptance of human frailty.

#### **6.2.4.3 Humility in the Balance**

Because self-control, knowledge, and mode are by their nature susceptible to perfecting and over-achievement, humility plays a grounding role in the virtue of temperance itself. The amount of knowledge available today is staggering; there is virtually no end to how much can be known. Humility keeps knowledge from becoming prideful, aware of its provisional nature and of its limitations in producing a moral life.<sup>607</sup> Humility also balances our efforts at self-control. When self-control is idolized and elevated above its proper position, it can become a source of prideful comparison. Rather than an essential tool in the task of edification, it becomes a measuring stick, assessing one's moral effort and soon their moral worth. The presence of humility as a component of temperance mitigates the tendency of self-control to breed pride and division. Moreover, the practice of self-control can fortify our humility; because we are fallen, we need self-control. Acknowledging the incomplete nature of our still-divided selves and the reality of the messages of consumption that surround us reveals our continuing need for self-control, which demonstrates our continuing imperfection along the road of the virtuous life. Thus, humility guards against pridefulness in our own efforts.

Yet humility does not always guard against pride; it can easily transform itself *into* pride, particularly when restraint and control are emphasized. A problem common to virtue ethics is that the acts generated by a particular virtue are often mistaken for the virtue itself. Nowhere is it more apparent than with humility; it is

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<sup>607</sup> Winfried Corduan, 'Humility and Commitment: An Approach to Modern Hermeneutics', *Themelios* 11:3 (1986), 83-8 (83).

often worshipped for its own sake and viewed as the sole component of acceptable moral action. Like the components of temperance that it grounds, humility must itself be grounded by other aspects of virtue in a deep and holistic understanding of the virtuous life. In this sense, humility makes sense in its location within Thomistic-Aristotelian temperance: like temperance, which only *is* temperance when its actions are subtle and unrecognized, true humility is present when it vanishes in use.

So, these four components – self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility – together characterize the essentials of the virtue of temperance. What remains to consider is the appearance or characterization of this virtue’s being and action when it is fully present. The fullest, most complete description of this is the presence of *harmonious order*.

### **6.2.5 Harmonious Order**

*Harmonious order* is the fullest expression of the virtue of temperance; manifested both internally and externally, it exemplifies the coordination and cooperation of the various parts of the human person. This section will consider the nature of moral order as primary, creative, and divine; the location of harmonious order within the continuum from repression to flourishing; and the important difference between order as *kosmos* and order as *decorum*.

#### **6.2.5.1 Order as Primary, Created, and Divine**

The first step is considering the broader nature of moral order, which is foundational to any society.<sup>608</sup> One of the primary benefits of social life is bringing control to an out-of-control world. Yet the order of temperance is more than a state of strict and

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<sup>608</sup> I am grateful to Robert Song for emphasizing this point to me.

continuous control; it is more enduring, more stable, and more reliable. Separate and distinct elements are gathered and brought into a larger structure; what was isolated is now a unified, purposeful whole. Plato connects order to the higher moral life and calls the person who attains philosophical virtue ‘as divine and ordered as a human being can be’ (*Rep.* 500c7-d1).<sup>609</sup>

Indeed, order is often viewed as divine in origin. Order is instituted and blessed by God, who repeatedly calls the ordering of creation *tōv*, ‘good’ (Gen. 1). Moral order is present in the fabric of creation; indeed, the two terms are often viewed synonymously.<sup>610</sup> Both Augustine and Calvin use order as a foundational theological and moral category.<sup>611</sup> Augustine sees order as divine in origin (*conf.* 5.11) and states that ‘the peace of all things is the tranquility of order’ (*ciu.* 19.13). For Calvin, order is unchanging, intentional, and dynamic, instituted and moderated by God (*Inst.* I.13.21, I.16.3). Thus, humanity is located within the created order, which makes particular moral claims upon it. However, this runs counter to fallen self-will, as sin means that ‘we find this order of things a problem and are rebelliously disposed towards it.’<sup>612</sup> Moral theologian Josef Pieper correctly notes that human internal order ‘is not a simply given and self-evident reality, but rather that the same forces from which human existence derives its being can upset that inner order to the point of destroying the spiritual and moral person.’<sup>613</sup> Thus, moral order is found not only in creation’s origins but also in its culmination. The *exitus-reditus* structure of the *Summa* shows Aquinas’s location of the human moral life as originating from divine

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<sup>609</sup> See also *Rep.* 485a-486e.

<sup>610</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, Publishing, 1986), 31.

<sup>611</sup> See 4.2.2.2 and 5.2.1.1 above, respectively.

<sup>612</sup> O’Donovan states: ‘And yet this order still stands over against us and makes its claims upon us. When man is least on guard against God he finds his natural ordering reasserting itself and carrying him in directions against which his self-will revolts’ (*Moral Order*, 17).

<sup>613</sup> Pieper, 148.

order and concluding in divine beatitude. What Oliver O'Donovan calls the 'Easter principle' reveals how the resurrection of Jesus 'restored and fulfilled the intelligible order of creation.'<sup>614</sup> This is, however, inherently hopeful, as the gospel is 'good news' not because we *must* live within this moral order, but precisely because *it is possible* to live within it.<sup>615</sup>

As stated earlier, order as control is one of the primary goods of any society. Yet order, on its own, is too static and 'flat' a category to fully contain the possible internal concord – the 'good news' – of temperance. Rather, it will (ideally) evolve into the more positive and attractive alternative of *harmony*.

#### **6.2.5.2 From Order to Harmony**

As the moral agent grows in the virtue of temperance, internal and external 'order' matures into a beautiful and symphonic harmony. Understood as consonance and congruence, this harmony is *stable* without being *static*; it is *dynamic* without being *disordered*. Order still has a large measure of self-control, whereas moving towards harmony leads you towards the fullness of 'happiness' and human flourishing. The figures in this study are themselves located at different points on the spectrum. Whereas Calvin's conception of order is more restrictive and more concerned with control (*Inst.* I.13.21), Augustine echoes Plato by connecting order and harmony (*ciu.* 19.13). The presence of either order or harmony is influenced by the relative strengths of the various components of temperance. When self-control is the most active component of the virtue of temperance, the result will be a more strictly structured order. However, when control is 'tempered', so to speak, by the presence of knowledge, mode, and humility, order in its strict sense is transformed into

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<sup>614</sup> O'Donovan, *Moral Order*, ix.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

harmony, in which order is employed for the larger purpose of bringing discrete elements into an ordered relationship which creates something both beautiful and larger than themselves – greater than the sum of their parts. Order is certainly a result of the four components, but it is an imperfect relationship, a shadowy sketch (or should we say, a rigid, black and white outline) of the true fruit of temperance as *temperies* ('harmonious balance').<sup>616</sup>

The harmony it engenders is musical in nature, with limiting notes as in a scale or a musical chord. It is defined as symphony and concord, and is opposed to disaccord. Plato employs this musical illustration in his connection of *kosmos* and *harmonia*, order and harmony.

He [the *sōphron* man] puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes on a musical scale – high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. (*Rep.* 443d)

This also engages the third definition of *mode*, 'a set of musical notes forming a scale and from which melodies and harmonies are constructed.' This recalls the definition of temperance as *attunement*, 'to put in tune with; to adjust the pitch of a note, chord, instrument.'<sup>617</sup> The very harmony of beautiful music 'lies between the fatal extremes of mechanism and chaos', with tyrannical order on the one side and cacophonous noise on the other.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, greater mastery of the material provides an increased capacity for creativity and expression.<sup>619</sup> Such phenomena as musical jam sessions, jazz scat vocals, and comedy improvisation are fresh and dynamic, yet grounded in an

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<sup>616</sup> Interestingly, while rejecting many aspects of traditional temperance, Mary Daly recognizes the need for 'a moderation and restraint of sexual impulses that is necessary for psychic balance and clarity of mind' (224).

<sup>617</sup> See van Wensveen, 'Attunement', 72; and Daly, 287.

<sup>618</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Wisdom as Moderation: A Philosophy of the Middle Way* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 1.

<sup>619</sup> Hartshorne noted: 'With mechanism we are merely bored, with chaos merely confused' (1).



established structure that is required for true harmony of expression.<sup>620</sup> Stanley Hauerwas states that while improvisation ‘allows and indeed encourages the virtuoso to stray, wander, explore, it nonetheless demands that she remains close to home.’<sup>621</sup> It is mastery of the material that gives the moral agent the comfort and competence needed to convert order into harmony.

### **6.2.5.3 Harmonious Order and Human Flourishing**

The intended and natural outcome of the virtue of temperance is human flourishing, characterized by beauty and happiness. Whether described as eudaimonia, beatitude, blessedness, or the well-lived life, it is the end and purpose of human existence. John Wesley admonished the parents in his congregation: “Even when a child first begins to speak or to run alone, a good parent follows behind saying, many times each day, ‘He made *you*; and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy’ (SS 114.10). This happiness Aquinas calls beatitude, much like the ‘beatitudes of blessedness’ spoken in the Sermon on the Mount.

Throughout history, scholars of eudaimonistic flourishing have considered the questions, ‘What is the point of being human? What is the end towards which we journey?’ This flourishing can take different forms depending on one’s ethical orientation. Oliver O’Donovan favors the Aristotelian ‘ordered-to-flourish’ over the Platonic ‘ordered-to-serve’, as it allows questions of human flourishing to stand on their own, within the realm of nature and creation, and without the attendant

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<sup>620</sup> Albert Jonsen states that improvisation ‘departs from the composition and must return to it; and, indeed, even as it flows from the artist’s virtuosity, it must remain at least remotely true to the composer’s inspiration’; see his ‘The Ethicist as Improvisationalist’, in Lisa Sowle Cahill and James Childress, eds., *Christian Ethics: Problems and Prospects* (Cleveland OH: Pilgrim Press, 1996), 220-246 (224).

<sup>621</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 79 n.10. See also Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2004).

cosmological and soteriological concerns.<sup>622</sup> These concerns are valid in themselves, but they beg the question of the larger moral context. Much like the ‘natural end’ for an acorn may legitimately be either an oak tree or food for a pig, human flourishing is concerned with both natural and supernatural ends.<sup>623</sup> Temperance is markedly relevant to these teleological questions, particularly within its sphere of action regarding the natural ends of humanity (e.g. *ST* II-II.141.7).

Temperance also has a special relationship to the grace and beauty of human flourishing. Plato sees beauty and virtue as arising from measure and proportion (*Phil* 64e) and states that the life of the *sōphron* man will ‘be gentle in all respects... more pleasant’ than a life of licentiousness (*Laws* 734a-b). In the *Charmides*, he declares that temperance is beneficial and truly a blessing (*Char.* 169b, *Char.* 176a). Even Aquinas does not restrict himself to concerns about the needs of life, but acknowledges the beauty and tranquility of soul that is attendant to temperance (II-II.141.2 *ad* 3). Commenting on this, Pieper calls the serenity of spirit generated by temperance ‘the seal and fruit of order’, which is ‘the purpose and goal of *temperantia*.’<sup>624</sup> This may be somewhat counter-intuitive, as Craiutu notes that while temperance appears beautiful to itself, it unknowingly ‘appears black and sober, and consequently ugly-looking’ to the self-indulgent.<sup>625</sup> The beauty of the temperate life may be like the message of the cross, the power of God for believers but foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Cor. 1.18).

Yet what if we ‘appear beautiful’ to others but are deceiving ourselves? Put another way, is it possible for one’s internal assurance to be misguided, to appear beautiful but actually possess an ‘agreement’ other than the internal harmony of

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<sup>622</sup> O’Donovan, *Moral Order*, 34.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>624</sup> Pieper, 147.

<sup>625</sup> Aurelian Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 15.

temperance? What other manifestations of harmony and order might account for this? There is one final issue that bears examining – the difference between order as *kosmos* and order as *decorum*.

#### 6.2.5.4 *Kosmos and Decorum*

In his book *Pagan Virtue*, John Casey reflects on the beauty that is attendant to temperance:

We find in grace of comportment something in the spirit of people that we might want to call ‘harmonious’. And gracelessness in manner and comportment often goes with those defects of character that suggest lack of temperance. Willfulness, childishness, uncontrolled passion very often show themselves in graceless behaviour, and even in sheer ugliness of physical gesture.<sup>626</sup>

Casey’s comments call attention to an interesting aspect of the order and harmony of temperance – namely, that graciousness and beauty display themselves in such outward manifestations as ‘behaviour, manner, and comportment.’<sup>627</sup> This reveals less a concern for the internal harmony of the truly virtuous than a desire for the outward, aesthetic indications of a decorous and ‘ordered’ life.

This highlights an insight from the previous section; namely, that a difference in moral context affects the construction and sphere of ‘harmony’ and ‘order’. While Platonic *kosmos* conveys an internal consonance, and the early Stoic cosmology stresses a moral alignment to nature, the Roman *decorum* (Gk. *to prepon*) emphasizes a social credibility and respectability.<sup>628</sup> ‘Order’ is now determined, not by conformance to cosmic or religious forms, but rather by the social expectations arising from ‘civil’ society; and morality is now subordinated to aesthetics, with the Roman virtue of approbation being of first concern (*Off.* 1.28.98). Moreover, the

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<sup>626</sup> Casey, 113.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> See 3.2.4.2 and 3.2.5.2 above for a discussion of temperance and *prepon/decorum*.

Aristotelian concern for internal and external congruence is rendered superfluous as the external demands of *decorum* take center moral stage. ‘Harmony’ is no longer internal but the harmonious interactions of people conducting themselves appropriately and conforming to a socially mediated standard of behavior.

The harmonious ordering of temperance, therefore, may reflect two very different conceptions of ‘order’, each with a different practical outcome. The significance of this distinction is easily understated and overlooked. The actions deemed ‘virtuous’ by someone concerned with social approbation will be quite different from those of someone concerned with authentic knowledge, measured human limit, and genuine humility. The external ordering of *decorum* locates its *telos* in the values of the day, taking its cues from the larger society. The internal ordering of *kosmos*, however, is ideally oriented to a virtuous *telos*. Thus, the pursuit of individual virtue may place one at cross purposes to society but rightly aligned to the pursuit of authentic human flourishing. Societal order may find itself at odds with the internal order of temperance, thus begging the question of which order one chooses to prioritize. It is certainly possible that both conceptions of order may be simultaneously fulfilled, but it is neither required nor expected.

Temperance has revealed itself as a remarkably rich and complex trait that engages the human person at both the ‘lowest’ and ‘highest’ levels. Far from the humdrum, mediocre quality of recent accounts, it is a vital and dynamic attribute that enables human animals to fully embody both their animality and their rationality. However, any retrieval of a classic virtue raises questions of a more systematic nature, three of which will be considered in the following, final section of this chapter.

### **6.3 Particularities of the Virtue of Temperance**

This new account of temperance raises several questions: how the account functions internally, what makes it different from its predecessors, and whether it is the same virtue under discussion. The first question examines the relationship between the various components of temperance and the virtue at large; the second compares this new account of temperance and past accounts; and the third considers whether there exists one single and coherent virtue of ‘temperance’ present across the different cultures and philosophies considered in this thesis.

#### **6.3.1 The Components and the Whole**

Chapters two through five of this study reveal that the historical witnesses do not always express each component of temperance. This begs the question: Are we still justifiably talking about ‘temperance’? How important are the various components? Does a person need to possess and demonstrate each component to be temperate?

##### **6.3.1.1 Potential and Actual Temperance**

The lengthy examination of these various components may beg the question: Does each component need to be present for ‘temperance’ to be present? This dilemma seems endemic to the examination of temperance, as Socrates’ discussion in the *Charmides* considers and rejects several definitions of temperance which appear to be incomplete (as opposed to incorrect).<sup>629</sup> Without being overly simplistic or highly legalistic, it is helpful to consider the Aristotelian and Thomistic distinctions between temperance and continence; that is, the difference between a ‘true’ virtue and a ‘sub-

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<sup>629</sup> See 2.4.2 above.

‘or ‘potential’ virtue.<sup>630</sup> Aquinas calls continence a potential part of temperance, and his choice of words is informative, as ‘potential’ signifies some currently unrealized possibility.<sup>631</sup> Whereas for Aquinas, potential virtues share in the power of the primary virtue to a lesser degree and towards a secondary matter, my understanding of ‘potential’ as ‘having or showing the capacity to become or develop into something’ arises in part from Aristotle’s dichotomy of potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*energeia* or *entelecheia*), where actuality is the state of being fully realized (e.g. *de an.* III.5, *Meta.* XII.7-10). And whereas Aquinas assigned the ‘potential parts’ of temperance to objects of lesser desire, I contend that true temperance applies to all of the objects of temperance, but that this may happen in varying degrees of actualization.<sup>632</sup>

Thus, temperance will reach its fullest potential – that is, it will be fully actualized as a virtue – when all four components are both present and active. Temperance will not be ‘absent’ when one or more the components are absent; rather, temperance will not be fully realized and will not bring its fullest transformative power to the situation and to one’s character without all four components interacting to produce the harmonious order that characterizes fully actualized temperance.<sup>633</sup> Self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility – these are all notes in the scale of temperance, displaying the essence of Plato’s *harmonia*.<sup>634</sup> Individually they may ring clear and true, but when brought together in the intentional and related manner of a musical chord, the effect is qualitatively different, and altogether more powerful.

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<sup>630</sup> ‘The potential parts of a virtue connected with it, which are directed to certain secondary acts or matters, not having, as it were, the whole power of the principal virtue’ (*ST* II-II.48.1).

<sup>631</sup> E.g. note the difference in the *potential energy* and the *kinetic energy* of an object.

<sup>632</sup> I am not taking issue here with Aquinas’s choices regarding the particular objects of temperance; rather, I am distinguishing our different uses of the terminology of potentiality.

<sup>633</sup> Meilaender finds the move from continence to temperance an indication ‘that we have begun to approach the furthest potentialities of our nature, that we are living life characteristic of flourishing human beings’ (12).

<sup>634</sup> See *Rep.* 431e, 432a, 443d; *Phdo.* 86c.

In some ways, this resembles the anthropological and missiological bounded-set/centered-set discussion, where one's sense of 'belonging' to a particular set is understood less as a function of whether one is within the boundary of acceptable behavior and more upon the degree to which one approaches the core or center which exemplifies the nature (one could say mode?) of the set.<sup>635</sup> While the categories do have some overlap, considering temperance from a centered-set viewpoint enables the moral agent to engage the process of acquiring virtue more teleologically, as they have the center of the set as their *telos*.

### **6.3.1.2 *Temperare*: Temperance as Mixture**

As noted above, the concepts of modulation and mode brings a more active and dynamic element than the concepts of moderation and the mean. In a similar manner, [the presence of] the 'mixing' connotation of *temperare* may be said to oversee and regulate the various components of temperance. When the Greek term *sōphrosynē* was primarily associated with *moderatio* and *temperantiae*, it received from the root *tempus* the semantic connotations of mixing, measuring, hardening or softening, and compounding properly.<sup>636</sup> It is the sense of mixture and measured compounds that the root concept of *temperare* informs the discussion of temperance in an overarching, comprehensive manner. In the same way that temperance oversees, regulates, coordinates, and orchestrates the workings of the various parts of ourselves, so the *temperare* function of temperance will act to oversee and orchestrate the various components of temperance. The actions and contributions of each component will change according to the situation and the related requirements.

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<sup>635</sup> Paul Hiebert, 'Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories', *Gospel in Context* 1:4 (1978): 24-9.

<sup>636</sup> See 3.2.5.3 above.

In this manner, the *temperare* aspect serves as the mode of the virtue, both within the components of the virtue itself and in its harmonizing function for the various parts of the human person. This feature also highlights the importance of ‘phronetic’ assessment of each component of temperance, an informed recognition of the role each element is to play in each particular situation. This concept of ‘mixing’ is dynamic and responsive, addressing each situation in its particularities.<sup>637</sup> Thus, it is similar in function and concept to the Aristotelian mean in its ideal conception (i.e. *Eth.Nic.*1109a27-29), while avoiding some of the problems that notions of intermediacy and quantitative moderation invariably generate.

### **6.3.1.3 The Social and Communal Nature of Temperance**

However, while all the components of temperance should ideally be present, it is unlikely that individual persons will always embody each component to its fullest extent, or even to the same degree. This particularity of temperance considers presence over absence and relates to one’s particular approach to the ethical enterprise. Based on theological or philosophical commitments, sociocultural particulars or simply one’s personality, each person may find themselves prioritizing one particular aspect of temperance. These commitments, which both shape and reflect one’s approach to moral formation more fundamentally, influences one’s approach to the work of temperance and through which temperance manifests itself in their moral life. Aristotle notes the distinction between the self-controlled and the resistant, those persons who by their nature find it easier to withstand the temptations

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<sup>637</sup> This is not just present in the Latin terminology, but reflects its roots in the Greek. Schmid notes: ‘I am concerned to explore its [*Charmides*] depiction of *sōphrosynē* – human moderation – as an attitude that must be dynamically brought to each new situation, and dynamically reached in that situation’ (*x-xi*).



of appetite and desire.<sup>638</sup> Some persons are more inclined and adept at self-control; other work more naturally within the categories of knowledge or model. Therefore, while temperance has traditionally been understood as an ‘individual’ virtue, it actually may be best embodied within a community of persons, with each element present in a strong form, albeit in different people. Moreover, there is an essentially communal nature to temperance which, while possibly present in all virtues, is particularly connected to temperance due to its essential nature as the harmonious order of disparate parts. Those persons whose gift is knowledge will serve to inform and educate. Those who are disciplined will exhort the community to embody their ideals and stand firm in their commitment. And those with deep humility will ground the community in their creatureliness and frailties. These gifts and capacities will work together to create a full and harmonious whole.

In his exploration of Plato’s theory of the unity of the virtues in *Prot.* 349-350, Oliver O’Donovan discusses the different ways virtues manifest in different people, displaying ‘different salient features ...[all of which can] be called good.’<sup>639</sup> He contrasts three women – a dedicated social worker, a devoted mother, and a disciplined intellectual – and says that they may admire and even imitate each other, ‘but insofar as each woman’s life has been *shaped* by one virtue, rather than others, it does not have room to accommodate the specialized excellences of the others.’<sup>640</sup> Neither would the ‘well-balanced’ woman, whose life incorporates all these virtues to the same moderate degree, be considered morally superior. Thus, we have ‘moral pluralism challenging the homogeneity of virtue.’<sup>641</sup> However, plurality does not equal relativism, as O’Donovan attributes this diversity not to moral relativism but to

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<sup>638</sup> See 3.1.3.2 (C) above.

<sup>639</sup> O’Donovan, *Moral Order*, 219. His arguing point is Plato’s apparent disregard of this phenomenon.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*

a heterogeneity of virtue.<sup>642</sup> These differences in character are inherently positive because ‘they are true interpretations, each within a unique vocational matrix, of the one moral life... the one life-task which is differentiated particularly in the uniqueness of individual vocations.’<sup>643</sup>

This insight brings clarity to a phenomenon I have observed over years of living in faith-based community. When we have addressed problems or discussed discipleship, there have been persons who have consistently advocated for one particular approach or posture to the problem. One person usually recommends learning more about the problem, creating and revising our theology and our position, studying more and more until we have a better grasp of the issue at hand. Another person constantly wants to divest the community of its material goods and scale back its appetites. All solutions involved becoming one-car families, shopping exclusively at thrift stores, and eating only beans and rice. Yet another person always wants to step back from making a decision or taking a position. Citing the need for humility, he says, ‘How can we think we have anything to offer the world? All we can do is offer our small, imperfect attempts, failures though they may be.’ As a community member, I have always been puzzled by my aggravation with this set of responses, none of which is demonstrably ‘false’. Each seems to contain some truth, or at least some vital aspect of it. Yet when declared to be the singular answer for a dilemma, they feel not so much incorrect as inadequate. Although they do convey part of the truth of a situation, they need the other elements to be part of a rich, balanced, holistic, *temperate* response. Again, this is not a discussion of the ‘ordinal’ nature of temperance – ‘am I temperate or not?’ – so much as an exploration of the fullness of the virtue and how it may be achieved in its fullness.

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<sup>642</sup> O’Donovan, *Moral Order*, 220. He translates this theologically as ‘vocation’ or ‘gift.’

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

Finally, as temperance is constituted *by* community, it is present *for* community. As Paul declares, ‘If we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind (*sōphronoumen*), it is for you’ (2 Cor. 5.13). While we may be allowed to be out of our minds for God, we must be in our right minds – *sōphron* – to be present and beneficial for each other. Even when ecstatic existence may be the path to God, *sōphron* living is the path to one another. This controverts the notion that temperance is solely an individual virtue; rather, it has profound implications for the external, communal moral life. To be temperate, we must have each other; to be of any use to each other, we must be temperate. This is circular in the best sense of the word, continuously reinforcing our growth in virtue and in community.

So, this account of temperance makes space for both potential and actual virtue; it is characterized by a phronetic mixing of its various components; and it is most fully realized when these components are present within a community of virtuous persons. The second particularity of temperance compares this new account of temperance to its predecessors.

### **6.3.2 Comparisons with Other Accounts of Temperance**

This new account of the virtue of temperance does not emerge from a vacuum, nor does it break completely from previous accounts. At present, it stands alongside the familiar understandings of temperance as abstinence from alcohol and moderation-in-all-things. How does it compare with these accounts? Is there any continuity? What is the importance of the differences? This section will consider the abstinence position of the Temperance Movement, the prevailing interpretation of temperance as moderation, and the possibility of expanding the sphere of temperance beyond the paradigmatic objects of food, alcohol, and sexual activity.

### 6.3.2.1 Beyond the Temperance Movement

As noted earlier, both the abstinence and moderation positions of the Temperance Movement, in addition to claiming biblical and ecclesiastical support, viewed themselves as residing within the moral tradition of the virtue of temperance.<sup>644</sup> However, this study has demonstrated that the ‘temperance’ of the Temperance Movement is a stale and brittle image of a once-cardinal virtue. It does not enable wise choices, channel the most powerful internal urges, or restore fractured humanity to oneness in Christ; it merely symbolizes a largely failed social movement and the extremes it promoted. Thus, it differs significantly, in three primary ways, from the temperance discerned in this study.

First, the Temperance Movement was, by and large, not about temperance *simpliciter*, nor was it actually about the virtue itself, in any form. With the exception of a few instances, temperance was invoked as a response to particularly distressing social issues. This was not unprecedented; temperance has often been defined primarily *contra* a particular vice (*EN III.10*), and it has often been understood as pertaining almost exclusively to one particular paradigm, as with the patristic emphasis on sexual continence.<sup>645</sup> Moreover, the focus upon alcohol to the exclusion of other subjects of temperance, when examined within its historical journey, reflects more about situational moral concerns than about the virtue itself. Whereas the Church Fathers chose – for moral and theological reasons – to focus their attention on issues of sexuality, the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century viewed alcohol as by far the more pressing issue. Thus, temperance became associated almost exclusively with the debate surrounding alcohol consumption.

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<sup>644</sup> See 1.1.1.3 above.

<sup>645</sup> See 3.1.3.1 and 4.1.2 above.

Second, the *virtue* of temperance became displaced by (or conflated with) the *rhetoric* and *practice* of abstinence. This historically nuanced trait of character was transformed into a lifestyle decision, an ecumenical movement, and a political issue; and it reinforced the transformation of temperance from an active, engaged disposition to a series of discrete, isolated actions. Also, in the shift from temperance-as-virtue to abstinence-as-practice, the language of *virtue* is gradually replaced with the language of *pragmatism* (in talk of ‘expediency’) and *obligation* (in talk of ‘duty’). This unfortunately reorients the focus of Christian morality from the formation of a wholly integrated character to an ethic of disconnected actions. Thus, the title ‘Temperance Movement’ went from ‘appropriate’ to ‘retained, though now only in part applicable’, to ‘altogether misapplied’ (*R&D*, 205).

Third, the association of ‘temperance’ with a lifestyle of total abstinence had the unintended effect of making ‘moderation’ appear to be the liberal, nonmoralistic approach to alcohol in particular and sensual indulgence in general. While certainly preferable to the legalistic alternative, the shifting attitude towards moderation strengthened either the rigid or moderative aspects of temperance, while marginalizing those which are dynamic and responsive. Thus, moderation survived as the ‘middle’ response to questions of appetite and indulgence.

### **6.3.2.2 Modulation, Not Moderation**

As discussed earlier, temperance has acquired the connotation of ‘everything in moderation’ or ‘moderation in all things.’<sup>646</sup> This understanding of temperance is less easily caricatured than that of the Temperance Movement, as it appears to lie closer to the central themes of temperance, particularly the Aristotelian mean, Stoic *apatheia*,

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<sup>646</sup> See 1.2.2 above.

and the Reformation emphasis on self-restraint. And to be fair, some accounts of moderation sound quite similar to the temperance advanced in this chapter; Harry Clor defines moderation as ‘balance or proportionality, recognition of limits, [and] some capacity for disinterestedness.’<sup>647</sup>

However, as the saying goes, the enemy of the best is often the good. Whereas Nietzsche unhelpfully conflated moderation and mediocrity (and thus condemned the former) under ‘the Aristotelianism of morals’, his concerns about a ‘harmless, apathetic mean’ are well-placed.<sup>648</sup> As noted earlier, ‘moderation’ tends towards the average, static conception of finding the middle ground, doing a bit of everything and not too much of anything.<sup>649</sup> Again, this is not a logical or philosophical necessity; in his work on the importance of rationality (*orthos logos*) for Aristotelian virtue, Curzer states that the question ‘Am I being moderate about this?’ is ‘a more targeted way of asking, ‘Am I being reasonable about this?’”<sup>650</sup> Yet unless the target approximates a mathematical average, the comparison is still not very helpful.

Yet possibilities exist within the word’s linguistic cousin, *modulation*. Within the semantic domain of *modus*, there are notable differences between the concepts of *moderation* and *modulation*. The primary definitions of *moderate*, from the Latin *moderatus* (‘reduced, controlled’) include ‘average in some particular’ and ‘to make or become less extreme.’ This in turn reflects the common understandings of *moderation*, from the Latin *moderare* (‘to control’), as ‘avoidance of extremes’ or

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<sup>647</sup> Clor, 47.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>649</sup> See 1.2.2 above. .

<sup>650</sup> Curzer, *Virtues*, 53.

‘within reasonable limits.’<sup>651</sup> Compare this with *modulate*, from the Latin *modulatus* (‘make melody’, in turn from *modulus*, ‘measure’). Its primary definitions include ‘to exert a modifying or controlling influence’; ‘to vary the strength, tone, or pitch of something’; ‘alter the amplitude or frequency, in accordance with the variations of a second signal’; ‘to change from one key to the next’; and ‘to change from one form or condition to another.’<sup>652</sup> Initially, modulation may appear more ambiguous than moderation, as it is less commonly used and thus perhaps less well-known. However, its semantic domains contain a dynamism that suggests possibilities beyond the subduing, dilutive associations of moderation. *Modulation* allows for a variety of effects – strengthening, softening, altering, and coordinating various components into one coherent harmony. And because it promotes harmony over average, modulation may also be more phronetic than moderation, as it encompasses the entire spectrum of experience and does not marginalize the outliers of a given set.

Remembering the horses that symbolize temperance in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, consider an equestrian example: the difference between the ‘jog trot’ of the Western style of horseback riding and the ‘collected trot’ of English dressage. While both gaits travel at approximately the same pace, they differ greatly in characteristic and function. Intended to cover the long distances of a cattle drive, the slow and gentle jog trot maximizes rider comfort and minimizes the expenditure of the horse’s energy. Its shuffling style is a calculated mediocrity, designed for evenness and uniformity. Compare this to the collected trot of dressage, which moves at the same slower pace as the jog trot but with much more potential energy. It contains the same inherent power as the working or extended trot, but in a light, mobile, compressed frame. At

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<sup>651</sup> Admittedly, there is a semantic domain of ‘to preside over’ (which actually suggests the phronetic nature of mixing I recommend in 6.3.1.2), but that meaning has gotten lost behind the ones of average and control.

<sup>652</sup> See 3.2.5.3 above for more discussion of the semantic roots of ‘mode’ and associated terms.

any moment, the power harnessed in the collected trot may be converted into a different movement, something impossible for the lackadaisical jog trot. This is not to say that moderation is categorically vicious, or even problematic. However, it is difficult to envision a vibrant and compelling moral life based upon a gait that is designed to minimize discomfort and maximize homogeneity.

One final area of possibility, which aligns closely with the discoveries of this thesis, arises from the musical aspects of modulation.<sup>653</sup> In her reading of temperance as ‘attunement’, environmental ethicist Louke van Wensveen cites Mary Daly, who defines ‘to temper’ as ‘to put in tune with...to adjust the pitch of [something]’.<sup>654</sup> However, the metaphor of attunement is helpful only if one has both a working tuning fork and a good ear. A ‘good ear’ is one’s increasingly developed phronetic abilities; the tuning fork is the presence of a clear *telos* and the ability to align oneself with it – to *attune* oneself to it.

The phronetic ‘ear’ of temperance should be attuned both to the possibilities for temperance within current compositions; it may also discern new melodies as they appear. Accepted ethical opinion restricts temperance primarily, even exclusively, to the physical appetites of food, drink, and sex. These appetites are legitimate objects of temperance, as the acts of consumption and generation are two universals of human existence. Recognizing their place within the sphere of temperance is both warranted and beneficial. Yet there may be other, fresher possibilities to explore, as ‘consumption’ and ‘generation’ have larger domains of consequence than the physical appetites. Are there grounds to expand the sphere of temperance to include non-nutritive forms of consumption and nonsexual forms of generation?

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<sup>653</sup> See 6.2.5.2 above.

<sup>654</sup> Van Wensveen, ‘Attunement’, 72, citing Daly, 287-90.



### 6.3.2.3 Expansion of the Sphere of Temperance

The primary texts contain some precedents for enlargement of the virtue's scope. Plato frequently contrasts temperance to arrogance, hubris, and tyrannical desires of all kinds, which address the appetites for power, honor, and immortality. While Aristotle painstakingly restricts the sphere of temperance to food, drink, and sex, there are spirited critiques of Aristotle's limiting the virtue's range of objects. In this view, food, drink, and sex represent only the 'paradigm cases' of the Aristotelian version of temperance.<sup>655</sup> Understanding temperance as wisdom in choosing, the early Stoics bring all choices under the virtue's purview, while the Roman Stoa emphasize its connections with frugality, social decorum, and a more general self-control. Moreover, the Stoics emphasize the role of temperance in stabilizing the emotions, which opens the door for the virtue to impact all aspects of the moral life. Augustine applies temperance to 'popular renown' and 'the knowledge of things', as well as the triad of 'carnality, curiosity, and conceit' (*trin.* 12). Aquinas, while not explicitly expanding the sphere of temperance, includes the desire for money and honor among the 'objects of desire' that may oppose reason (II.II 129.2).<sup>656</sup> Although Calvin employs temperance and its synonyms in the narrow sense, he also reads them as maintaining order across the whole of the moral life. Finally, Wesley defines temperance as using and not abusing the goods of this world, a voluntary abstinence from all pleasures which distract us from God.

Thus, there is clearly some latitude in the primary texts for expanding the sphere of temperance, and the possibilities are numerous. Temperance may reasonably be applied to drugs, video games, and gambling, as their abuse reveals the

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<sup>655</sup> Curzer, 'Temperance', 9. McCabe also calls these the 'paradigm cases' of temperance (169).

<sup>656</sup> While Aquinas discusses this under the virtue of magnanimity, Austin calls this 'a socio-cultural argument for extending the matter of temperance today' (104), and I think he is correct. I am grateful to him for bringing this passage to my attention.

same errors in judgment and lifestyle as the traditional objects of temperance.<sup>657</sup> One recent conference saw contributions on the temperance's importance for such diverse issues as the balance of contemplation and activism, media usage, simplicity in physical living spaces, environmentalism, academic ethics, and monetary greed.<sup>658</sup> Clearly, many scholars are intuiting new areas of significance. Temperance has been connected to the emotional component of clinical medical deliberation and the posture of emotional imperturbability.<sup>659</sup> It may have import for the growing philosophical and technological movement of transhumanism.<sup>660</sup> Other recent work has applied temperance to environmental ethics, highlighting the impact of consumptive patterns on the physical world and the restraint necessary for ecological health.<sup>661</sup> Thus, there appears to be both historical precedent and contemporary requirement for expanding the sphere of temperance beyond its paradigmatic boundaries.

Having considered the various components of temperance, the manner in which they interact internally, and how this new account diverges from the most common interpretations of 'temperance', one might wonder whether 'temperance' can actually be discussed in any sort of coherent manner.

### **6.3.3 A *Tao* of Temperance?**

The third particularity of a fresh interpretation of temperance assesses whether there exists one single and coherent virtue of 'temperance' present across the different

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<sup>657</sup> Curzer mentions the 'obsessive behavior, denial, rationalization, etc.' that accompany all the potential objects of temperance ('Temperance', 7-8).

<sup>658</sup>

[http://www.viterbo.edu/sites/default/files/centers/d.b.\\_reinhardt\\_institute/2009temperanceconferenceschedule.pdf](http://www.viterbo.edu/sites/default/files/centers/d.b._reinhardt_institute/2009temperanceconferenceschedule.pdf)

<sup>659</sup> See Carr, 'Passionate Deliberation.'

<sup>660</sup> See Maria Kenney, 'A Humble Embrace of Limits: Temperance as Critique of Transhumanism', paper presented at the 2015 meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, Chicago, IL.

<sup>661</sup> See Philip Cafaro, 'Gluttony, Arrogance, Greed, and Apathy: An Exploration of Environmental Vice', in *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, ed. Ronald D. Sandler and Philip Cafaro (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 135-158; van Wensveen, 'Attunement'; Wenz; and White.

cultures and philosophies considered in this study. The question will be framed within the differing perspectives of C.S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man* and Alasdair MacIntyre's *A Short History of Ethics*.

### 6.3.3.1 Universal versus Contextual Morality

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis engages a variety of moral systems in search of a shared conception of morality, an overarching, ordinate, and transcendent system from which all existing morality is derived.<sup>662</sup> This he calls the *Tao*, which 'is not one among a series of possible systems of value'; rather, 'it is the sole source of all value judgements.' Rejection of the *Tao* necessarily means rejection of all objective morality; one cannot embrace true moral reality outside the *Tao*.<sup>663</sup>

Lewis roots within the *Tao* the universal applicability of the moral law, which encompasses and surpasses both 'rules and ruled alike.' By accepting the objective nature of the morality of the *Tao*, human moral conduct is guided by something larger than human whims and constructs and thus becomes a gift instead of a burden, 'a rule which is not tyranny [and] an obedience which is not slavery.'<sup>664</sup> Furthermore, Lewis argues that all 'new' ethical conceptions and philosophies are at best trendy repackaging of the *Tao* and at worst willfully emotive human fabrications. All true morality, he argues, flows within the stream of the *Tao* as it travels through human history.

There never has been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'ideologies,' all consist of fragments from the *Tao* itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* [1943] (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-6.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>665</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-6.

Thus, Lewis argues for the existence of absolute moral norms, from which all true ‘virtues’ arise.

Lewis’s belief in a universal morality is not isolated or exceptional.<sup>666</sup> Oliver O’Donovan states: ‘The order of things that God has made is *there*. It is objective, and mankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is concerned with man’s life in accordance with this order.’<sup>667</sup> Sissela Bok argues for a ‘shared morality’ with ‘a limited set of values so down-to-earth and so commonplace as to be most easily recognized across societal and other boundaries.’<sup>668</sup> Andre Comte-Sponville, while acknowledging his own contributions to the discussion, maintains that he relies upon ‘what the tradition offered [him]’ and which he has ‘merely taken up anew.’<sup>669</sup>

And when psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman encountered significant concerns about the contextuality of morality at the start of their project, they searched ‘empirically’ within an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural framework for the presence of common and recurring values.<sup>670</sup>

There is a strong convergence across time, place, and intellectual tradition about certain core virtues. As one tradition bled into another, as one catalog infused and then gave way to the next, particular virtues recurred with pleasant tenacity. Although others may appear on some lists and then be lost again, certain virtues, either explicitly or thematically, had real staying power.<sup>671</sup>

The persistence of these core virtues, they claim, ‘suggests the possibility of universality’ of human morality.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> In addition to the works discussed here, see Mortimer J. Adler, *Desires Right and Wrong: The Ethics of Enough* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 111-4.

<sup>667</sup> O’Donovan, *Moral Order*, 17.

<sup>668</sup> Sissela Bok, *Common Values* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>669</sup> Comte-Sponville, 5.

<sup>670</sup> Peterson and Seligman, 35-6.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

Against this view of the universalizability of moral norms stands *A Short History of Ethics*, wherein Alasdair MacIntyre argues for the inevitable contextuality of human moral concepts. MacIntyre maintains that attempting to understand historical moral concepts apart from their history is impossible, as such concepts both arise from and shape the social contexts in which they reside. MacIntyre, like Lewis, acknowledges moral discourse has ‘the inheritance of not only one, but of a number of well-integrated moralities.’<sup>673</sup> And, like Lewis, MacIntyre admits the existence of numerous systems of moral thought. However, MacIntyre sees this multiplicity of moralities as representing discrete streams of moral thought. Their structures may be similar, inasmuch as each contains moral goals, rules, and virtues of some sort.

These, however, vary widely from culture to culture and from system to system.<sup>674</sup> Moral concepts, he argues, are not ‘a timeless, limited, unchanging, determinate species of concept, necessarily having the same features throughout their history.’<sup>675</sup> He is suspicious of historians who purport to study concepts ‘historically’ but actually ‘subtly assimilate different moral concepts’, erroneously affirming the universal nature of what is considered ‘right’ and ‘good.’<sup>676</sup> As an example, MacIntyre considers the moral concept of ‘justice’, which, although present as a moral category throughout history, displays such wide differences across its different historical conceptions that it may scarcely be called the same virtue, differences which arise from distinctive forms of social life.<sup>677</sup> He concludes with a qualified endorsement of a ‘traditional moral vocabulary’, which may be used alongside an acknowledgement that ‘a shared interpretation of this vocabulary’ is unlikely to occur.

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<sup>673</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* [1966] (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 266.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 266. He echoes this concern in later works; see his ‘*Sōphrosynē*’, 1.

<sup>675</sup> MacIntyre, *Short History*, 1.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Therefore, promoting a singular moral vocabulary is unrealistic, if not patently disingenuous.<sup>678</sup> This mindset does not allow for the ‘complexity of history’, a complexity which is compounded by intellectual study:

It is not that we have first a straightforward history of moral concepts and then a separate and secondary history of philosophical comment. For to analyze a concept philosophically may often be to assist in its transformation by suggesting that it needs revision, or that it is discredited in some way, or that it has a certain kind of prestige. Philosophy leaves everything as it is – except concepts.<sup>679</sup>

Lest this be dismissed merely as MacIntyre’s premature position, he maintains in the prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue* (published forty-one years after *A Short History*), ‘What historical enquiry discloses is the situatedness of all enquiry, the extent to which what are taken to be the standards of truth and of rational justification in the contexts of practice vary from one time and place to another.’<sup>680</sup>

Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches’ *Christians Among the Virtues* reveals the influence of MacIntyre’s position on the contextuality of moral norms. As they argue for the distinctiveness of the Christian life, the authors deny any straightforward or facile knowledge of ‘virtues.’<sup>681</sup> ‘We cannot presume that all accounts of the virtues will come to the same thing,’ they maintain, ‘for the “we” who are giving the account make all the difference.’<sup>682</sup> In a warning with particular import for this study, they caution against ‘appropriating pagan virtues from their pagan contexts – particularly whole patterns of virtue such as the “cardinal virtues”.’<sup>683</sup> They maintain that these contrasts do not poison or preclude meaningful conversation about virtue between different narratives; rather, they both invigorate and necessitate it.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> MacIntyre, *Short History*, 268.

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>680</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, xii.

<sup>681</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, 26.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>684</sup> Hauerwas and Pinches, x.

However, the differences in context and *telos* must be acknowledged. James Keenan also states that any current account of the cardinal virtues must account for the influence of culture and context.<sup>685</sup>

In fairness, these positions are not wholly incompatible. Lewis allows for the possibility – even the inevitability – of moral progress, but only as ‘development from within.’ Any moral advance made that diverges radically from the *Tao* is ‘mere innovation’, not a ‘real moral advance.’<sup>686</sup> Conversely, a cavalier acceptance of some ‘universal morality’ is legitimately disquieting, as it may conceal naiveté at best and coercive intentions at worst.<sup>687</sup> Interestingly, while both MacIntyre and Lewis argue against moral emotivism, Lewis sees the answer to such emotivism in the recognition of the *Tao*, while MacIntyre believes that such emotivism occurs precisely because the modern, Enlightenment attempt to identify objective moral concepts has failed.

### **6.3.3.2 A Qualified Yes**

So, the question at hand is whether, after all the centuries of speculation and the chapters of academic treatment, there actually a single virtue of ‘temperance’. Has the study successfully traced the journey of one specific and coherent virtue, or has it revealed a series of related but ultimately different virtues, each so dependent upon their context as to make them useless outside of it?

In one sense, both the format and conclusions of chapters two through five suggest that MacIntyre is correct. There is not one unchanging ‘virtue of temperance’, fixed and invariable, unchanged through the centuries in its meaning and import. The etymological transitions alone – from *sōphrosynē* to *temperantia* to temperance – complicate the mapping of this virtue; Carr reveals this in his

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<sup>685</sup> Keenan, 709-29.

<sup>686</sup> Lewis, *Abolition*, 56-7.

<sup>687</sup> Bok, 10-1.

identification of the broad conceptions of temperance, where *sōphrosynē*, moderation, *temperantia* as mixture, and decorum are equally legitimate characterizations of temperance at various points in time.<sup>688</sup> The changes in object and sphere also complicate the matter. Aristotle limited temperance to food, drink, and sexual activity; the Stoics applied it to choice writ large. Whereas Augustine (both from historical location and personal inclination) saw sexual desire as the most pernicious object of desire, the rampant alcohol abuse witnessed by the reformers of the Temperance Movements took priority. Wesley preached temperance in dress and diet, and warned against gluttonous patterns of sleep; Socrates responded to the *hubris* of the Thirty Tyrants by advocating temperance as prudent self-knowledge. Moreover, answering this question is complicated by the occasional untethering of word and concept. North traces both the word and the concept throughout Greek literature; Peterson and Seligman searched for convergences of virtues ‘either explicitly or thematically.’<sup>689</sup> Similarly, this study has examined both the usage and appearances of ‘temperance’ – be it *sōphrosynē*, *temperantia*, or temperance – along with related ideas such as continence and moderation. It has been difficult to determine where the boundaries lie, where one concept ends and another begins. Has temperance has not unraveled beyond reconstruction?

What is evident is that temperance has never faded away entirely from the moral landscape. Each theorist in this study possesses a moral concept concerned with the regulation of physical and mental desire; in some form, both the word and the concept are present. It could be argued, as MacIntyre does in his discussion of justice, that the continuing presence of the word does not guarantee the presence of any

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<sup>688</sup> See 1.3.1 above.

<sup>689</sup> See North, *ix*, and Peterson and Seligman, 50, respectively.



legitimately related concept.<sup>690</sup> And the point is well made; it would be irresponsible to insist upon – or willfully impose – an artificial ‘one-to-one mapping of a virtue across cultures.’<sup>691</sup> Yet, there is something about this virtue that transcends philosophical, theological, and sociocultural boundaries and impresses itself upon some of the greatest minds of the age. Despite the fact that temperance is marginalized within the contemporary moral lexicon, scholars from before Plato to after the Temperance Movement have judged it worthy of retention. Beyond its status as a cardinal virtue (as it is valued by figures who work outside this system), temperance continues to impress itself upon the moral imagination [of the day].<sup>692</sup> The objects of temperance may vary with the spirit of the age, and with the particularities of the philosopher or theologian. Understanding temperance as the harmonious ordering of the whole person—informed by and reflecting self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility – allows for a wide range of objects of temperance while retaining the virtue’s internal integrity and cohesion.

So in the final analysis, the answer to the question, ‘Is there one virtue that exists which we may call *temperance*?’ is a qualified and epistemologically humble ‘yes’. MacIntyre is correct that moral concepts are not ‘timeless and unhistorical.’<sup>693</sup> The history and journey of the virtue of temperance should be acknowledged and celebrated. Moreover, Comte-Sponville expresses a wonderful gratitude for the vibrant heritage received from those who came before:

It would be ridiculous for a treatise on virtues to strive for originality or novelty. Besides, it is braver and more honorable to confront the masters on their own ground than to avoid any comparison with them by somehow insisting on being original. For the last 2,500 years, if not

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<sup>690</sup> MacIntyre, *Short History*, 3.

<sup>691</sup> Peterson and Seligman, 35-6.

<sup>692</sup> In a fascinating connection, even Lewis compares the *Tao* with one of the strongest connotations of temperance: ‘When we speak from within the *Tao* we can speak of Man having power over himself in a sense truly analogous to an individual’s self-control’ (*Abolition*, 82).

<sup>693</sup> MacIntyre, *Short History*, 269.

more, the greatest minds have thought about the virtues; my desire was to continue their efforts, in my own way and with the means available to me, using their ideas to formulate my own.<sup>694</sup>

This formulation of temperance may be ‘new’, but it stands on the shoulders of giants. Without their foundation, the richness of any retrieval is revealed as transitory and fleeting, however trendy it may become. Those who dare to speak of ‘temperance’ in the twenty-first century have the courage and ability to do so only because others have already spoken, feeding the river of moral tradition that flows in and out of cultures, systems of thought, and the centuries themselves.

#### **6.4 Summary of the Interpretation of the Virtue of Temperance**

This chapter has considered a fresh interpretation of the virtue of temperance as *harmonious order within the whole person as constituted by the presence and interactions of self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility*. These components are present, at various times and to varying degrees, throughout the history of the virtue. Temperance is most fully actualized when all components are present and engaged, and it exists in a more potential form when one or more are missing or inactive. It is dynamic and phronetic in that it is not a ‘mean’ in the sense of a mathematical average; nor is it a predetermined figure that allows a formulaic application. It is most fully present and instantiated when it is socially constituted. It differs from both common conceptions of temperance – abstinence from alcohol and ‘everything in moderation’. Lastly, temperance is, in both word and concept, both a continuation and an innovation of the historical virtue of temperance. What remains is to apply this new formulation of temperance to one of the most morally significant issues of today – consumerism – and its relationship to the act of consumption.

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<sup>694</sup> Comte-Sponville, 5.

## Chapter Seven

### A Virtue of Revolutionaries: Temperance and Consumerism

This thesis has proposed a new interpretation of temperance, generated from within the historical development of the virtue across seven primary schools of thought. Temperance is not complete abstinence from alcohol, the constant exercise of self-restraint, or even ‘everything in moderation’; it is the harmonious order generated by the perichoretic presence of self-control, knowledge, mode, and humility. It does not merely regulate the appetites for food, drink, and sexual relations. Rather, it modulates and harmonizes the various desires natural to the human person, resulting in an internal health and concord.

This study has, in a sense, explicated the *whats* and *hows* of temperance, as shaped by the *whens* and *wheres* of its sociocultural, theological, and philosophical locations. The final step explores the *why* of temperance, the impact it might have upon the daily exercise of the moral life. Indeed, this is the central point of the study, as any sincere engagement with virtue inevitably ‘demands a certain response from us whether we make it or not.’<sup>695</sup> What remains is the moral agent’s cultivation of the virtue of temperance regarding one particular moral issue. Thus, the concluding chapter applies this interpretation of temperance to the modern Western issue of consumerism. While focusing primarily on the experiences of shopping and material purchases, food and alcohol consumption will be also be addressed inasmuch as they are related to, and indicative of, the overall consumeristic trend towards unbridled pleasure through consumption.

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<sup>695</sup> Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 31.

## 7.1 Consumerism and Consumption

‘Whoever said money doesn’t buy happiness simply didn’t know where to shop.’ This statement (attributed to actress Bo Derek) summarizes the often explicit, almost ubiquitous worldview of the culture of ‘consumerism’. This section will examine two particularities of the practice of consumerism: the tenets of the ethos of consumerism, and the relationship between consumerism and happiness. However, it is important to distinguish between the culture and social practice of *consumerism* and the particular acts of *consumption*, as the terms are commonly but erroneously conflated in popular discourse. Consumption is the acquisition and use of an item for some purpose or gain; it can be connected to the intake for food, or the accumulation and ownership of consumer goods. Thus consumption is a biological necessity, an inescapable part of the human reality as physical creatures. However, consumption choices inevitably impact the external world, both other persons and the rest of the created order. Thus, consumption is also morally laden and ethically quite complex, as these choices both reflect and inform one’s moral norms, values, and teleology. When consumption choices lead to excessive valuation of the act of consuming, the result is the culture of *consumerism*, which moves beyond the physical acts of consumption into the promulgation of a way of life.

### 7.1.1 The Creation of Consumerism and the ‘Consumer’

In common vocabulary since the 1960s, consumerism has been variously defined as ‘efforts to protect the consumer’s interest’ to ‘excess materialism.’<sup>696</sup> While the term itself may appear recent, the origins of contemporary consumerism can be traced to the rise of ‘possessive individualism’ of the seventeenth century, wherein persons are

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<sup>696</sup> Roger Swagler, ‘Evolution and Applications of the Term *Consumerism*: Theme and Variations’, *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 28:2 (1994) 347-60 (348).

defined by ownership both of their possessions and of their skills and capabilities. These capacities are the sole possession of the individual and are ‘given’ to the larger society only within economic transactions, which reduces society to a series of ‘economic relations.’<sup>697</sup> This possessive individualism was reinforced by gradual yet fundamental changes in both consumption and production practices. Historian William Leach describes the creation and cultivation of consumerism in early twentieth century America and the resulting ethical shifts.<sup>698</sup> Such changes as the elevation of personal ‘choice’ (alongside the variety and availability of things from which to choose), an increased emphasis upon customer service and satisfaction, and the importance of ‘fostering desire’ combined to create a new way of life where consumption was valorized alongside production.<sup>699</sup>

The focus upon amplifying desire was a hallmark of the development, as a ‘reasonable dissatisfaction with what you have’ was touted as the safeguard against ‘hard times.’<sup>700</sup> Indeed, banker Paul Mazur used explicitly ethical language in describing the consumer’s ‘*duty*’ to ‘the machinery which has developed consumer demands.’<sup>701</sup> In ‘The Evolution of the Consumer’, Mazur documented the construction of the human consumer as a necessary correlate to the increases in production capacity. And although the term ‘consumerism’ emerged in the late twentieth century, journalist Samuel Strauss coined the term ‘consumptionism’ as early as 1924 to describe ‘the science of intensifying consumption.’<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>697</sup> C. B. Macpherson, C.B., *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* [1962] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>698</sup> William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), *xiii*.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 60, 113.

<sup>700</sup> Charles F. Kettering, ‘Keeping the Customer Dissatisfied’, *Nation’s Business* 17:1 (1929) 30-1, 79 (31).

<sup>701</sup> Paul M. Mazur, ‘Is the Cost of Distribution Too High?’ *Harvard Business Review* 4 (1925), 5-6.

<sup>702</sup> Samuel Strauss, ‘Things Are In The Saddle’, *The Atlantic Monthly* 134:5 (1924), 577-88 (581).

This emphasis upon consumption affected more than purchasing habits. Building upon possessive individualism's reframing of sociopolitical life in economic terms, consumptionism altered the fundamental importance of the American citizen to their country from citizen to consumer.<sup>703</sup> The relationship between persons and possessions also changed significantly, as material goods developed an *a priori* life and significance that went beyond mere utility.<sup>704</sup> These goods could – and would – provide happiness to the savvy consumer.<sup>705</sup> Meaning and fulfillment were now readily available, showcased in the artfully designed window displays of the innovative 'department stores.' Significant cultural changes included the substitution of consumption focus from 'survival' to 'style' and the necessity of planned obsolescence in maintaining the cycle of production and consumption. These changes were described as 'conspicuous consumption', Thorstein Veblen's term for the practice of purchasing merely to display one's wealth and status.<sup>706</sup> Characteristic of the 'leisure class', wealth served as the gateway to profligacy and valueless purchases, which others sought to imitate to demonstrate their comparable economic status.

This imitation also played a central and commercially beneficial role in the rise of consumerism, particularly among the emerging middle class who strove to emulate the upper classes as best they could.<sup>707</sup> The twentieth century saw the expansion of 'conspicuous consumption' beyond the leisure class, as Americans across the socioeconomic spectrum attempted to match the lifestyles they saw in

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<sup>703</sup> Strauss, 579. Strauss maintained this shift was already changing the role of law, journalism, and politics in American society (579).

<sup>704</sup> Leach, 54.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>706</sup> See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899] (New York: Dover Publications, 1994). George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011) comments: 'What is of utmost importance about [Veblen's] work is that unlike most other sociological works of the time, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* focuses on consumption rather than production. Thus, it anticipated the current shift in social theory away from a focus on production and toward a focus on consumption' (195).

<sup>707</sup> Paul M. Mazur, *American Prosperity: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Viking Press, 1928), 42-55.

advertising and the media. Veblen's 'conspicuous consumption' was prevalent in the small towns of post-Civil War America, as the emerging middle class sought to distinguish itself from the lower classes who promulgated disorder and disquiet amidst the newly forming national identity.<sup>708</sup> A rising emphasis upon gentility encouraged conformity to the lifestyle and example of 'the best society', i.e. the upper classes with origins in the European aristocracy.<sup>709</sup> Obedience to the system of public display was 'all part of the show, part of the seeking for applause, part of the dread of scorn.'<sup>710</sup> These patterns of consumption remained a feature of the now-established middle class; becoming solidly entrenched in the post-World War Two suburban expansion after the hardships of the Great Depression. The late twentieth century saw another rise in emulative consumption, moving beyond the upper and middle classes to include the working classes and the working poor. This 'national culture of upscale spending', as Judith Schor terms it, acts as 'the ultimate social art' in a culture almost wholly defined by issues of consumption.<sup>711</sup> And contained within this 'culture of consumption' is a moral framework that promises meaning and happiness.

### **7.1.2 Consumerism as Ethos and Happiness**

In one sense, consumerism is nothing less than the pursuit of meaning, as the '-ism' denotes the presence of a system, school of thought, set of behaviors, or ideologies. In this way, the language and framework of consumption now describe numerous aspects of common life, from 'church-shopping' to 'choosing a spouse' to unending

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<sup>708</sup> Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 3.

<sup>709</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992) xvi.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>711</sup> Judith Schor, *The Overspent American: Why We Want What We Don't Need* (New York: Harper Press, 1998), 4.

assessments of education, medicine, and public services via ‘satisfaction surveys.’<sup>712</sup> Characterized by two central components – uninhibited consumption and a disproportionately high valuation of the practice and goods of this consumption – the ‘ethos of consumerism’ assigns great importance to the role of consumption in determining the means and ends of human flourishing.<sup>713</sup> These new parameters crowd out any consideration of the ethical components of consumerism.<sup>714</sup> They retard emotional maturity and promote an ‘infantilist ethos’ upon which capitalism ‘has come to depend.’<sup>715</sup> Genuine virtue is marginalized in the quest for temporary pleasures, or is recast altogether within the new materialistic worldview. Virtue is now that which facilitates the consumerist *telos*: ‘Selfishness no longer cloaks itself in religion: it has become religion. Greed is not merely good for *me*. The new ethos wants us to believe it *is* good in itself.’<sup>716</sup> Thus, consumerism becomes ‘a spiritual disposition, a way of looking at the world around us that is deeply formative.’<sup>717</sup> Relationships that once provided moral meaning – relationships with God, with others, and with nature – are stripped of their vitality and goodness as their ‘value’ is assessed.<sup>718</sup> Moreover, the ethos of consumerism is increasingly employed as a reliable index for such traditional, even classical categories as health, happiness, and flourishing.

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<sup>712</sup> For a good discussion of this phenomenon, see Rodney Clapp, ‘Introduction: Consumption and the Modern Ethos’, in Rodney Clapp (ed.), *The Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture* (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998).

<sup>713</sup> Laura Hartman, *The Christian Consumer: Living Faithfully in a Fragile World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>715</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 5. He later clarifies this not as a ‘second childhood’ but an ‘enduring childishness’ (7).

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>717</sup> William Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 35.

<sup>718</sup> Sallie MacFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 96.



As Bo Derek's statement implies, happiness is the explicit *telos* of the culture of consumerism. Advertisers promise happiness if you make the right purchases, as when Coca-Cola tells you to 'Open Happiness.' Lipton says, 'You can't buy happiness, but you can buy tea, and that's the same thing.' A McDonald's billboard encourages you to 'Wake up happy!' And in the TV show *Mad Men*, advertising executive Don Draper maintains, 'Advertising is based on one thing, happiness. And you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear. It's a billboard on the side of the road that screams reassurance that whatever you are doing is okay, that YOU are okay.' This happiness and flourishing is political as well as personal. The economic category of 'consumer confidence' measures the degree to which consumers – again, notice the nomenclature – to which consumers are confident enough in their economic situation to *purchase goods* instead of *save money*. This, in turn, is taken as an indication of the health (or flourishing) of the economy and the nation in general. Yet if Gross Domestic Product is truly 'the god to which we pray', it does not measure human welfare in any genuine capacity, as it fails to account for anything not immediately quantifiable.<sup>719</sup> Indeed, it overlooks many things that *can* be quantified, such as the number of people in poverty both globally and locally. Moreover, it does not appear to generate the happiness it promises. British psychologist Oliver James ironically notes a significant increase in anxiety and depression among persons infected with 'the 'Affluenza virus.'<sup>720</sup>

Should happiness actually be achieved, the interests of consumerism require it to be fleeting and fragile. 'Consumer society,' Zygmunt Bauman notes, 'manages to render non-satisfaction permanent.'<sup>721</sup> If our purchases actually provided happiness

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<sup>719</sup> Schor, 21.

<sup>720</sup> Oliver James, *Affluenza: How to Be Successful and Stay Sane* (London: Vermillion Press, 2007).

<sup>721</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 80.

and contentment, the cycle of consumption would grind to a halt.<sup>722</sup> In this new version of consumerism, the pursuit of wealth works alongside the pursuit of pleasure. Yet the latter can only bring so much enjoyment before its novelty is exhausted, as the physical limitations of the human body restrict the number of ways pleasure may actually be experienced.<sup>723</sup> This, in turn, generates an ‘imaginative hedonism’ which increases the anticipated pleasure of consumption items beyond what they can actually confer in themselves.<sup>724</sup> For the imaginative hedonist, the distance between ‘the constructed ideal and the experienced reality’ feeds a growing dissatisfaction with one’s experiences; the pleasure attained in contemplating the perfect scenario are essentially subtracted from the experience itself, a zero-sum game in which reality is perpetually substandard and disappointing.<sup>725</sup> Additionally, consumerism thrives by keeping people detached from their possessions, in an endless cycle of hope, purchase, boredom, and disposal.<sup>726</sup> This cycle reflects several of the seven deadly sins – gluttony, greed, even *acedia*; and like the seven deadly sins, they reflect the moral tenor, the ‘spiritual tone’ for consumerism.<sup>727</sup>

Thus, both the shift from consumption (consuming-to-live) to consumerism (living-to-consume) and the details of our consumption choices themselves present significant moral dilemmas. How do we engage in consumption without succumbing to consumerism? How do we consume goods without consuming others? At present, virtue ethics is not a major participant in the conversation, being sidelined by

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<sup>722</sup> Clive Hamilton, *Growth Fetish* (Sydney AU: Allen & Unwin, 2003) astutely observes: ‘Economic growth does not create happiness; unhappiness sustains economic growth’ (80).

<sup>723</sup> Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Alcuin Academics, 2005), 67.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-8.

<sup>725</sup> Campbell, 215.

<sup>726</sup> Cavanaugh, 34. Interestingly, in *Affluenza: When Too Much Is Never Enough* (Sydney AU: Allen & Unwin, 2005) Clive Hamilton attributes the virus of ‘affluenza’ not to detachment but to misplaced attachment to things rather than intrinsic goods (16-7). I think these points are complimentary, as the terms they use are not, *as* used, opposites but categorically different in their focus.

<sup>727</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

considerations of utility and obligation. Moreover, temperance has suffered under the rise of consumerism, being ‘eclipsed’ and actively impeded’ by the ethos of consumerism.<sup>728</sup> Labelled ‘sales-resistance’, it is literally transformed from virtue to vice.<sup>729</sup> While the control of physical appetites is often applauded in the service of such utilitarian goals as long life or sexual attractiveness, there is little concern for temperance as pathway to moral integrity and growth.<sup>730</sup>

Yet virtue language brings particular strengths to the discussion of consumerism (particularly its virtually wholesale acceptance into contemporary culture) by addressing the deeply ingrained, almost unconscious nature of its ideology and view of happiness and success.<sup>731</sup> And despite its contentious relationship to consumerism (or, perhaps, precisely because of it), temperance is particularly suited to address these challenges.<sup>732</sup> As early as 1625, Francis Bacon observed that, just as fortitude is required in adversity, temperance is the virtue most needed in times of prosperity, ‘for Prosperity doth best discover vice.’<sup>733</sup> More recently, President Barack Obama advocated a rediscovery of ‘the tempering qualities of humility and restraint’ in place of unrestricted consumption.<sup>734</sup> However, living into this exhortation is a complicated matter. Thus we arrive at the final question of this study: what is temperate consumption?

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<sup>728</sup> Christine Firer Hinze, ‘What is Enough? Catholic Social Thought, Consumption, and Material Sufficiency’, in William Schweiker and Charles Mathewes (eds.), *Having: Property and Possession in Religious and Social Life* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 162-88 (180).

<sup>729</sup> Lewis, *Abolition*, 81-2.

<sup>730</sup> MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ 6.

<sup>731</sup> Hinze, 177-8.

<sup>732</sup> Wenz calls it ‘traditionally opposed to consumerism’ (208).

<sup>733</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essays: or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (Indianapolis IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1905), 23-4. I am grateful to Nick Austin for alerting me to this source. See also Comte-Sponville, 42.

<sup>734</sup> Barack Obama, *The Inaugural Address, 2009* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009). I am grateful to Nick Austin for bringing this source to my attention.

## **7.2 Temperate Consumption**

Temperance is rediscovered in our consumer society by engaging the components from the historical discussion within the context of consumerism, applying the new interpretation of temperance to the issues at hand. It asks the question: what are the hallmarks of temperate consumption? It displays *harmonious order*, embodied in a deliberate mode of living, shaped and informed by knowledge, and strengthened and safeguarded by self-control and humility. Thus, it is *modal, informed, controlled, and humble*. It is *modal* because it seeks to regain the measure of the needs of life; because it understands and accepts the reality of the limits of life and the need to observe them; and because it is oriented to the true ends of life, both physical and metaphysical. It is *informed* because virtuously constructing the mode of temperate consumption requires being informed about these realities, both internal and external. It is *controlled* because consuming in a measured and informed manner can be difficult, and exercising control is therefore an essential (though by no means sufficient) component of temperate consumption. Finally, it is *humble* because consumerism is intimately tied to self-aggrandizement and competition, which humility opposes by reminding the temperate consumer of their mortality and finitude. With these characteristics, the temperate forms of consumption can be distilled from within the quagmire of consumerism.

### **7.2.1 Modal Consumption**

A disordered mode is where overconsumption may be seen the most starkly. The fundamental form of so many things has been lost or corrupted; there is an unprecedented increase in the ‘measure’ of things in contemporary western society. Americans’ standard of living increased dramatically in the 1980s, and has more than

doubled in recent years.<sup>735</sup> There is a surprising ‘malignancy’ within consumer culture, as homes and expenditures and ‘standards of living’ increase unchecked. The size of the average American home increased from 750 square feet in the late 1940s to 2320 square feet in 2000; the arrival of these ‘starter castles’ both reflected and reinforced prevalent material expectations. Cars now boast both air conditioning and seat warmers; global positioning systems and CD players (and increasingly, DVD players) are *de rigueur*. Ironically, many of these ‘McMansions’ boast three-car garages, containing the same square footage as that average 1940s house, that is typically used for ‘storage’. People now devote as much space to their material possessions as they once did to themselves.<sup>736</sup> Our food is a virtual ‘United Nations of restaurants’, with no more waiting for food to come into season.<sup>737</sup> Travel has increased; Americans now drive twice as much and fly *twenty-five* times as much as fifty years ago.<sup>738</sup>

A central reason for this malignant growth is that the definitions of the ‘good life’ have expanded.<sup>739</sup> ‘Keeping up with the top quintile is not easy,’ remarks Schor, ‘because they keep getting richer.’ Thus, the dollar amount on ‘dream-fulfilling income’ keeps rising, which necessitates longer hours at work and undercuts the satisfaction supposedly gained from material items.<sup>740</sup> Limits have been moved or abolished altogether. Neoclassical economists promote a model in which desires are limitless, and they seek to indoctrinate their consumers with this philosophy. Shopping has been wrenched from its contexts; instead of being the *means* by which

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<sup>735</sup> Schor, 11.

<sup>736</sup> John de Graaf, David Wann, and Thomas H. Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (San Francisco CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005), 24-5.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>739</sup> Schor, 12.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-4.

we acquire the necessities of life, it is now an *end* in itself –‘retail therapy.’ It is assigned a value and purpose it was never meant to have.

Contemporary society has become unmoored from the true purpose and function of things. *Why* do we own a house? What purpose does it serve? Moreover, it has lost the desire to understand these true purposes. One barometer of the contemporary housing mindset is the Home and Garden Network (HGTV). The desires – more than that, the expectations – of home buyers are sizeable and intractable, even for first-time homeowners. ‘We simply *must* have our own bathroom, with double vanities,’ they declare. ‘I mean, I just can’t live without granite countertops.’ I am always struck by the common insistence upon double ovens; who needs two ovens? Are all these people caterers? I cannot help but compare this to my father’s description of his first apartment as a newly married law student. He and my mother used an old door atop two filing cabinets for their dining table, which doubled as his work space. Moreover, they had a single lamp for their entire apartment. ‘We’d use it in the living room in the evening,’ he told me, ‘then we’d unplug it and take it back to the bedroom when it was time to go to sleep.’ I was struck by my internal response to his story – ‘why didn’t they just buy another lamp?’ Upon reflection, I realized that what sounded like hardship to me was commonsensical frugality to the children of Depression-era parents. They *needed* only one lamp, and while they desired (and eventually realized) the convenience of a lamp in every room, they could fulfill the function of home lighting with only one. This level of discipline in consumption almost defies imagination in today’s world of dollar stores and cheap box-store goods. With goods this cheap, why observe any limits at all?

These changing standards apply to food consumption as well. We no longer know about caloric needs and accurate portion size. We welcome the oversized servings at restaurants and accept them as norms. We take for granted an array of food choices that would astound all but the richest of our ancestor. An elderly Appalachian carpenter described his childhood as ‘if times were good, we had milk gravy; if times were tough, we had grease gravy.’ He had no memories of starvation or dire want; he viewed his childhood as reasonably comfortable. Yet most persons in the United States today, perhaps even those technically below the ‘poverty line’, would manage to live beyond this level of frugality.

The purpose of physical hunger has also been corrupted, resulting in a somewhat schizophrenic relationship with contemporary culture. On the one hand, hunger is never acceptable and should be satiated the very moment it appears. Ever-growing fast food meals, endless varieties of snacks, Taco Bell’s late-night ‘Fourth Meal’ – these teach the American consumer that the smallest pang of hunger requires immediate relief. Alongside this stands the equally powerful, equally visible message that hunger is to be denied for the sake of health (usually women’s) and appearance (almost always women’s). Women’s narratives of eating disorders are striking in their portrayals of women’s hunger as immense, frightening, and destructive. Hunger must continually be repressed lest it overwhelm the defenses and result in a gluttonous binge. Spoiled child or rejected exile – hunger is rarely a productive member of moral conversation.

In contrast, to consume temperately requires genuine attention to the purpose and meaning of human life. The ‘standard of living’ evolves not from the desire to measure up to our neighbors, nor from the desire for comfort and convenience, but from the actual measure of physical, mental, and emotional requirements, what

Aquinas called ‘the needs of this life.’ It will not believe the propaganda that our choices are limitless, that our capacity for growth is limitless; rather, it will recognize and accept the need for limits, both personal and social. It will recognize and welcome the true end of consumption, which is the physical and metaphysical flourishing of all creation, and it will align our consumption choices with these ends. However, while the ‘norm’ of temperate consumption is based upon a measured, informed, needs-based, grounded assessment at the intersection of our desires (both wants and needs) and the realities of the world, there will be ‘outliers’ in every set. This is where modulation is clearly superior to moderation as the mode of temperance. The variety encompassed within modulation also frees the moral agent to embrace a variety of forms of living temperately. Feasting, fasting, and ‘ordinary’ consumption may co-exist in an intersubjective relationship, together forming a harmonious ‘chord of consumption’ that acknowledges, affirms, and celebrates our needs and our wants, our proximate ends and our final ends.<sup>741</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that our consumption does serve an assortment of modes and purposes. In *The Christian Consumer*, Laura Hartman considers ‘good Christian consumption’ within four categories, each expressing one possible mode of approaching consumption – avoiding sin, embracing creation, loving the neighbor, and envisioning the future. While not mutually exclusive, these approaches reveal the variety of motivations and goals possible for each act of consumption.<sup>742</sup> Put simply, we eat for many reasons: to maintain physical functioning, to assuage some emotional need, to celebrate someone or something, for the sheer pleasure of eating itself. The common adage that ‘food is fuel’ states a legitimate and important truth for athletes and those pursuing weight loss, but it fails to convey the fullness of our relationship to

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<sup>741</sup> I use the word ‘ordinary’ here in both the common and liturgical senses.

<sup>742</sup> Hartman, 21.



food and its consumption. And when we acknowledge and embrace the role and purpose of physical hunger, we are empowered to consume in a balanced, healthy manner. Similarly, houses can do more than merely contain our possessions and ourselves. When we purchased our present home, my husband and I decided to seek one bedroom beyond our family's needs, because we value the practice of hospitality and wanted to include a space expressly for this purpose. Our acknowledgement of the multiple 'modes' of living affected our consumption choices. We did not blindly prioritize living more 'simply'; rather, we sought to live in orientation to our multiple goals and ideals. Failing to acknowledge the complexity does little to promote temperate patterns of consumption.

Temperate consumption requires an informed assessment of several things: our needs, the world's capacity to satisfy those needs, and the effect their satisfaction has on the rest of the world. Thus, the next area to consider is the role of knowledge and informed consumption.

### **7.2.2 Informed Consumption**

Mode and knowledge are intimately related; therefore, our knowledge must be well-grounded and accurate. When advertisers and economists are allowed to dictate a new and disordered mode of living, consumers internalize a false assessment of their needs. American consumers are increasingly convinced of the 'necessity' of larger homes, manicured lawns, private schools, designer clothes, and unsustainable food choices. On the popular television show *House Hunters*, home buyers consistently frame their desires in the language of necessity, transforming wants into needs. Conversely, when knowledge is corrupted, the door is opened for the refashioning of the mode in ways completely disconnected from reality. Fulfilling these ever-

expanding ‘needs’ requires an increasing amount of time and resources, which then limits the time and resources available to other, less materialistic pursuits. This is compounded by our lack of knowledge of reality, particularly the knowledge of the impact of our consumption choices.

In *Blessed are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*, ecotheologian Sallie MacFague frames her argument for consumptive restraint around the concept of *kenosis*, ‘the recognition that “something other than oneself is real” and not only deserves space but requires and demands it as well.’<sup>743</sup> This concept is simultaneously foreign and essential to the typical American consumer, who has little knowledge of how their goods are produced. Just this morning, I received five separate emails from discount, online clothing stores. It is the work of a moment to select a style, click ‘Add to Basket’ and ‘Proceed to Checkout’, and know nothing about my purchase beyond the size, color, and price. The enticing \$20 price tag contains a parallel, and entirely different, reality for the woman – or child – toiling in virtual servitude in the clothing factory. Earning mere pennies on the dollar, they can scarcely feed their family, let alone purchase the product of their work. I have no knowledge of the materials it contains; the pesticide burden of the cotton or chemical burden of the synthetic fabrics; the physical damage occurring amongst the dye workers. Our McMansions are constructed by day laborers, with wood acquired (the word ‘harvested’ implies a healthful cycle scarcely applicable here) by ‘clear-cutting’ forests; this ravages the diversity of flora and fauna, erodes topsoil, and exacerbates environmental issues such as flooding and desertification. Our manicured, mono-culture lawns require chemicals that leach into our rivers and water tables and cling to our children as they play. Emulation may seem expensive to our bank balance, but its

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<sup>743</sup> Sallie MacFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 145.

environmental costs are even greater. However, when the average consumer never sees the ledger sheet, business as usual continues in blissful ignorance.

To consume temperately requires examining our sources of knowledge for accuracy and content, making ‘a hardhearted, sober analysis of the way things are.’<sup>744</sup> An honest assessment of material needs must go beyond the culturally normed ‘standard of living’, arising as it does from the culture of consumerism. While nutritionists can assist us with calculating our caloric requirements, assessing our non-physical needs can be more complicated. Temperate consumption requires conversation partners, honest and gracious critics who can moderate discussions about our purchases. Information about all parts of life should be applied to our consumption choices, interacting in a perichoretic manner. Our physical and emotional needs, the impact of our choices upon the global community, the particular shape and impact we hold for our lives – truly informed consumption will attend to each of these concerns.

Somatic knowledge is also a potential source of information. Our culture does not know how to engage physical hunger in a healthy manner. Hunger is either vilified or glorified, a foe to be eradicated at the earliest opportunity or a badge of honor in the continuous struggle for physical perfection. Rarely are hunger’s signals welcomed as a component of temperate consumption. A case in point: Some friends and I have recently begun a system of eating which emphasizes the importance of leaving twelve hours between the evening meal and breakfast the following morning. This allows eight hours for digestion to be completed, and then provides four hours for the body to complete its healing and restorative functions. Eating late into the night, the theory goes, extends digestion and robs the body of its resources for

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<sup>744</sup> MacFague, *Consumers*, 145.

renewal, and prevents the optimization of wellness. Therefore, eating is completed by 7:00pm, and not resumed until 7:00am the following morning. To people accustomed to snacking at bedtime, this new routine has been uncomfortable; the literal meaning of ‘breakfast’ as ‘breaking one’s fast’ has been lost. And for persons accustomed (and acculturated) to assuage hunger whenever it appears, it is easy to feel deprived and abandon our efforts.

To strengthen my resolve, I have found it helpful bring these two forms of ‘knowledge’ into conversation. When my stomach growls and my resolve weakens, I visualize my hunger as an ally, a partner in the journey towards health. ‘Hello, hunger,’ I say. ‘Here you are. That means that my stomach is empty, and that my body gets to rest and heal for a while. Isn’t that a nice thing for it to do! Won’t I feel good tomorrow morning, rested and refreshed! Thanks for being here, hunger, thanks for being part of the team.’ Of course, it does not make me any less hungry. But because of my mind’s knowledge about my body’s needs for renewal, discomfort is transformed into something with purpose. Like the Roman Catholic and Orthodox rituals of fasting before morning Communion – the origin of the word *breakfast* – mind and body bring their information together for an acknowledged good.

When properly informed, our consumption choices can reflect an order that is both internal and external. However, virtuous knowledge is insufficient to ensure virtuous choices in matters of consumption. If Socrates and Plato were correct and right knowledge was sufficient for virtue, consumerism would fall on hard times. Yet information, even when present, is not enough. For this reason, temperate consumption must also be controlled.

### 7.2.3 Controlled Consumption

As stated above, my efforts to eat more healthfully have been aided by the integration of mental and physical information. However, knowing the benefits of going to bed hungry does not make the choice any easier. Living virtuously as physical creatures is complicated by the connectedness of appetite to both survival and pleasure. While pleasure is a skillfully designed aspect of the human drive for generation and sustenance, the pursuit of pleasure can take on a life of its own. Similarly, pride (and the pleasure we derive from its satisfaction) often develops a false and disordered importance. These human characteristics need not be fundamentally vicious or inferior to other aspects of the self to be problematic. However, they must be ‘tempered’ by other considerations, held within the regulatory loop that contains all components of virtuous choice and action. Often, this falls to the controlling aspect of temperance.

If Francis Bacon is correct that prosperity is excellent at discovering vice, then self-control – while not sufficient for a healthy moral life – remains particularly necessary in these times of unrestrained consumption. Because it is increasingly easy to satisfy our desires and appetites without sacrifice or delay, self-control plays a limited but matchless role in temperate consumption. However, the relationship is not immediately obvious. In the culture of consumerism, self-control is simultaneously idolized *and* parodied, glorified yet unacknowledged. One fast-food commercial shows hunger incapacitating a hungry customer; they are literally ‘out of control’ from hunger, and must buy a burger without delay. The most obvious offenders openly mock the practice of self-control by conflating fast food with hypersexualized models. Who needs self-control, they ask, when satisfying appetites feels so good?<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kD3P4gYUaU8>

Their explicitly sexual advertising declares that self-control is for wimps; real men – Hardee’s men – know how to satisfy their appetites.

One difficulty is that societal standards for self-control, as a category, are far from uniform. They can be excessive, as regarding woman and their consumption of food; they can be moderate, as with cigarettes or alcohol; and they can be nonexistent, as with houses, clothes, cars, toys, and items of leisure. Another complication is that consumerism does not always result from a lack of self-discipline, but from a corrupted view of consumption. Because consumerism is not generally considered vicious, we do not need to exercise self-control with our purchases. The perceived need for self-control may be lower for material items because they are most recently brought within the scope of temperance. Moreover, the excesses of consumerism often co-exist with quite rigorous expressions of self-discipline. It is not uncommon for persons who excel at physical fitness or are meticulous in their business practices to wholly cave under the cult of consumerism. Indeed, they may see their consumption choices as fitting rewards for their austerity in other areas. Unless it is oriented towards a virtuous and healthy *telos*, an increase in self-control is not an adequate response.

Clearly, employing self-control in a phronetic manner can be difficult. Because we remain creatures of will and appetite, we will continue to face temptations to overindulge, to consume in a disordered manner. There are times when we will be tempted to supersize our meal, to allow the real estate agent to show us a house just a little bit larger, to accept the increased credit limit and indulge in retail therapy. While modulated consumption may allow for feasting at Thanksgiving and other celebrations, it is problematic on a daily basis. Enjoying a fine wine with dinner should not spiral into drunkenness at midnight. Outgrowing one’s college apartment

does not necessitate immediately purchasing a starter mansion. Simply put, we need self-control to help us live temperately and harmoniously, to align us with the proper mode of life. When temperance is developing, self-control can be the first step in standing firm against consumerism and overconsumption. And even when virtue has truly become engrained, it can still operate as the final word, preserving phronesis against the assaults of consumer culture until harmonious order is restored.

Harmoniously ordered consumption requires an accurate and reality-based mode of living, informed by the realities of life and incorporating a measure of control as necessary. Yet these components only function when their relevance to the situation and the moral agent is acknowledged. Consumerism, however, either distorts or discards these components to serve its purposes: it inflates the mode of living, misinforms the consumer, and mocks self-control. Because this is tied to distorted views of the nature and purpose of the consumer, temperate consumption requires humility.

#### **7.2.4 Humble Consumption**

The gospel of consumerism proclaims that the customer is always right and only the best will do. It flourishes in the aggrandizement of the consumer, whose extravagant consumption acts as ‘a mark of reputability.’<sup>746</sup> Luxury items should be purchased ‘because you’re worth it’, although they are only ‘for those who can afford the best.’ Advertising once aimed to inform; now it attempts to seduce. Other strategies focus their message for particular anxieties, as when Mercedes-Benz marketed its 2009 roadster with the slogan: ‘Men talk about women, sports, and cars. Women talk about men in sports cars.’ One commentator aptly christened this campaign ‘The Advert for

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<sup>746</sup> Veblen, 47.

the Insecure.<sup>747</sup> Indeed, the combination of insecurity and vanity result in many versions of excess. We need larger, more ornate homes as ‘set design’ for a lifestyle of affluence, accessorized by the ‘right’ car, the designer clothes, and the latest technology. The phenomenon of ‘branding’ announces our affiliation with the upper crust.<sup>748</sup> As the moral agent negotiates the competition, displays of vanity, and layers of anxiety within consumer culture, humility guards against the relentless appeal of upscaling, competition, and emulation.

Humility overlaps with the other components of temperate consumption. Like self-control, humility serves a ‘restraining’ function, but in a different capacity. While self-control controls our patterns of consumption when they contravene a virtuous mode of living, humility works to align our mode of living with *phronesis* so that it may be virtuous. By acknowledging and reflecting the broader and deeper realities of the world and of ourselves, humility discourages the temperate consumer from diving headlong into the cycle of vanity and emulation. As a form of correct (or corrected) self-knowledge, humility aligns the temperate consumer’s actions with actual needs, resisting the slick marketing and seductive entreaties to a bigger, ‘better’ life. Humility aligns our patterns of consumption to the truth of what we need, rather than the pernicious deception of what we ‘deserve.’ Moreover, as a posture of other-centeredness, humility moves the consumer from a place of selfishness into a generosity towards the material needs of others.<sup>749</sup> Humble consumption is, therefore, a natural yet ethical consequence of ‘being closer to the truth.’<sup>750</sup>

Through its emphasis upon truthful self-knowledge, humility underscores the reality of human frailty and the need for sustenance, both physical and spiritual. This

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<sup>747</sup> <http://www.carscoops.com/2008/06/2009-mercedes-benz-sl-advert-for.html>

<sup>748</sup> One example is Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador Press, 1999).

<sup>749</sup> See Fullam for a detailed discussion of humility as other-centeredness.

<sup>750</sup> Murdoch, 93.



enables the moral agent to recognize their weaknesses, addictions, and gluttony. It is revealing that the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous begin with a declaration of the addict's inability to control their consumption: 'We know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins A.A. unless he has first accepted his devastating weakness and all its consequences.' While self-control plays a part in the journey of recovery, humility works at a more fundamental level, providing a firmer foundation for true sobriety and happiness.<sup>751</sup>

Finally, the grounding function of humility will facilitate harmoniously ordered consumption. Pearl Buck's novel *The Good Earth* vividly contrasts the 'grounding' of humble living and the disordering of consumptive excess. Although peasant farmer Wang Lung grows increasingly prosperous through hard work and frugality, his family prudently eschews luxury as above their social station.<sup>752</sup> However, when flooding prevents him from working the land, his newly acquired wealth and leisure lead him to a teahouse concubine. His sexual urges, which were once satisfied within his marital relations with O-lan, become literally insatiable.

When O-lan had come to his house it was health to his flesh and he lusted for her robustly as a beast for its mate and he took her and was satisfied and he forgot her and did his work and was content. But there was no such content now in his love for this girl, and there was no health in her for him ...It was as though a man, dying of thirst, drank the salt water of the sea which, though it is water, yet dries his blood into thirst and yet greater thirst so that in the end he dies, maddened by his very drinking.<sup>753</sup>

Wang Lung's increasing wealth, coupled with new opportunities for indulgence, shatters the harmonious order of village and marital life. The land, the 'good earth' that has literally grounded him throughout his life is submerged beneath the waters,

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<sup>751</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* [1952] (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2004), 21.

<sup>752</sup> 'We are not rich enough to eat white flour and lard' (47) in Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth* [1931] (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004).

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

and it is only when the flood abates and he can resume working the land that his life is re-ordered and harmony is restored.

So now Wang Lung was healed of his sickness of love by the good dark earth of his fields and he felt the moist soil on his feet and the health of the earth spread into his flesh ...and now that he was full of health again and free of the sickness of his love he could go to her and be finished with her and turn himself to other things.<sup>754</sup>

Although he eventually brings the concubine into his household, Wang Lung again identifies himself as a 'humble farmer', largely content with plain meals and ordinary pleasures. Reestablished in his relationship with the land and his work upon it, Wang Lung is restored to the health and benefit of balanced, modal appetites.

These things have emerged: a measured, modal life, observant of limits and oriented towards a virtuous end; balanced and mature knowledge of the various realities of the world and how they impact our consumption choices; the participation of self-control when tempted to consume badly; and the grounding of humility to embrace and apply the requirements of temperate consumption. It is increasingly clear that the culture of consumerism is unhealthy, idolatrous, and unsustainable. Imagining an alternative model, despite the difficulties, is both possible and essential.

### **7.2.5 Temperate Consumption**

As physical creatures, our appetites are inextricably tied to the things that sustain us, in food and sexuality and material goods. As social and political creatures, we engage in production, consumption, and commerce. As citizens of an increasingly global context, our consumption choices and their consequences become more and more

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<sup>754</sup> Buck, 212-4.

complex. They are also, in a sense, circular and self-fulfilling, wherein ‘the ideal consumer is one who, in consuming (as well as producing), completes creation.’<sup>755</sup>

One alternative model is modulation between the three practices of fasting, feasting, and ‘ordinary consumption.’<sup>756</sup> The temperate consumer resides within ‘ordinary consumption’: we consume as we need, attending to the ‘vital needs’ of physical and social life. We purchase groceries and cook meals; we clothe our families and furnish our homes; we participate in social events and recreation and travel. Yet coupled with this ordinary consumption are times of fasting and feasting, guided by the phronetic assessment of both circumstance and intentional action. Occasions such as buying a new home or planning a wedding may imbue our purchases with special meaning. There is the eager anticipation of purchasing ‘*the dress*’, extravagant in both expense and design, which is set above other purchases through its relationship to a singular, momentous event. Like the culinary feasts of holidays or life celebrations, there are legitimate motives for eating in material possessions. Yet within the ethos of consumerism, we have been acculturated to view feasting as normative; thus, it is held in tension with fasting from material goods. When an unexpected expense tightens the budget, we find the opportunity to detach ourselves from material purchases. By participating in Buy Nothing Day, we protest the post-Thanksgiving frenzy of Christmas shopping. For holidays, we choose to make gifts instead of purchasing them; we invest in experiences rather than possessions. Some changes will be modest, such as an increase in the lost arts of budgeting and saving. Other reforms will be more radical; including the trend towards downshifting and downsizing and such initiatives as the small house

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<sup>755</sup> Tsvi Blanchard, ‘After Eden: The Search for the Holy in a Consumer Society’, in Rodney Clapp (ed.), *The Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture* (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 91-106 (92).

<sup>756</sup> As earlier, I use this term in both the common and liturgical senses (see n.741 above).

movement. Central to this modulation is the balance between proximal and final ends, and the balance between necessity and beauty. A common piece of organizational advice is ‘keep only what you find genuinely useful or beautiful’.

While discerning these categories is certainly complex, it points to another element in temperate consumption: the importance of an alternative narrative to guide and encourage the temperate consumer. In her thought on ‘blessed consumption’, Sallie MacFague affirms the need to ‘imagine, interpret, feel, and moralize within an alternative paradigm.’<sup>757</sup> Our consumption practices can be vehicles for self-expression, symbolizing their moral commitments to interdependency within creation and envisioning the world we want to inhabit.<sup>758</sup> The success of consumerism arose significantly from their ability to create and convey an idea of ‘the good life.’ Yet temperate consumers, imagining and embodying a different ethos, can start to enact the life they envision, as ‘whoever has the power to project a vision of the good life and make it prevail has the most decisive power of all.’<sup>759</sup>

### **7.3 A Virtue of Revolutionaries**

Temperance, therefore, is the virtue both of the most common physical appetites and of a central cultural component of contemporary western society. Far from repressive or milquetoast, temperance concerns itself with nothing less than the social religion of rampant and idolatrous consumerism. The question now becomes: what effect would a return to temperance have on society at large? Will it support the current state of affairs, or will it subvert the status quo? Will it reinforce the emulation that is fundamental to consumerism and champion the continuation of consumer culture, or will it propose another ethical position?

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<sup>757</sup> MacFague, *Consumers*, 30.

<sup>758</sup> Blanchard, 92.

<sup>759</sup> Leach, *xiii*.

Earlier, the distinction was noted between the understanding of order as *decorum* and order as *kosmos*.<sup>760</sup> Champions of *decorum* acknowledge, even as they emphasize the importance of observing and upholding the social codes, that these codes might be ‘pure convention’ and nothing more than social norms.<sup>761</sup> These norms do not necessarily possess or reflect true virtue; they may simply codify the accepted, existing mores of a given culture. However, these social norms can be quite powerful, both reinforcing and reflecting the mores (and through them, the morals) imbedded in any particular society. Indeed, the phrase ‘standard of living’ suggests the social normativity of the criteria.<sup>762</sup> Moreover, accepting status quo as a paradigm might hinder the acquisition of virtue, if acting virtuously is counter-cultural. Thus, *decorum* is virtuous to the extent that the society it supports is itself virtuous. As Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti remarked, ‘It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society.’<sup>763</sup>

Contemporary Western society, with its ethos of gluttony and excess, may legitimately be considered profoundly sick. To adjust or align oneself to its misaligned moral compass reveals a corresponding sickness of self. *Decorum*, in a culture of consumerism, results in bondage to the cycle of satiation and emulation. Indeed, the ‘virus values’ of Affluenza – wealth, material possessions, physical appearance, and social standing – are textbook components of *decorum*.<sup>764</sup> *Decorum* worships the ‘social art’ and ‘national culture of upscale spending’ and will prioritize ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ because falling behind is shameful.<sup>765</sup> It eschews self-control as antithetical to luxury and the ‘good life’ that we ‘deserve’; it encourages

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<sup>760</sup> See 3.2.4.2, 3.2.5.2, and 6.2.5.4 above.

<sup>761</sup> Hans, 18-9.

<sup>762</sup> Schor, 9.

<sup>763</sup> This remark is popularly attributed to Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti, although I have not been able to locate a definitive location in his writings.

<sup>764</sup> James, 9.

<sup>765</sup> Schor, 4.

product ‘branding’ and the resulting social normativity. It confuses the mode and measure of life – the ‘standard’ of life – with an ever-increasing ‘standard of living.’ It inflames the pride of wealth and pleasure, creating distance between the compliant consumer and the other, ‘little’ people. It champions the pursuit of pleasure and corrupts the pursuit of meaning. It fosters the idea that happiness is purchased and transitory. Finally, it reduces personal identity to ‘consumer’, mediating all social and institutional relationships through its lens of unlimited choice and endless change. Even when it is not explicitly seeking social approval through the accumulation of wealth and consumer goods, it will hesitate to challenge the normativity of our consumerist culture. Like the advertising billboard that reassures and placates the consumer, *decorum* anaesthetizes humanity to the sickness of our situation.

But *kosmos*, arising as it does from authentic internal concord and a phronetic orientation to a virtuous *telos*, will generate actions quite different from those which prioritize social esteem. If *kosmos* says ‘Eat Less’, as did the recent advertisement by clothiers Abercrombie & Fitch, it will not be to fit into size-0 clothing but because the average American consumes much more than they need. If it says ‘Buy Less’, it is because our efforts and attention have more virtuous – and more satisfying – objects than an endless array of material goods. Temperance as *kosmos* will not be concerned with ‘keeping up with the Joneses’; it will ask whether the Joneses are virtuous moral exemplars. It will not evaluate its consumption choices in light of an arbitrary ‘standard of living’; it will work to align itself with the ‘standard’ of the rule of life, distinguishing *needs* from *wants*. The ‘person of means’ will again be recognized as a person with *means* – means to an end, not the end itself. It will reorient the search for meaning and happiness towards those things that actually provide them. Meaning will arise within the wholeness of the entirety of being human, not from the

deformation of one aspect of our humanity. It will recognize happiness as something to create and cultivate, not purchase and replace. Finally, it will recover and encourage true human flourishing, rediscovering the complex and layered functionality of humanity as consumers *and* producers, creatures *and* creators, pleasure-seekers *and* wisdom-seekers.

This, finally, is the deepest significance of a recovery of the virtue of temperance. Genuine temperance will not promote *decorum* in a sick society; but by promoting the internal harmony of *kosmos*, it may help in restoring that society to health, happiness, and flourishing. Authentic temperance – ‘perennial’ in its longevity yet ‘timely’ in its import – is radical, even revolutionary.<sup>766</sup> And here this study comes full circle, revisiting the familiar and oft-cited critique of temperance by Geach: uninteresting in its objects and hazardous in its implementation, humdrum and commonsensical – temperance is scarcely worth our notice.<sup>767</sup> Yet as this thesis has demonstrated, authentic temperance may well result in conflict with the larger society, as the ‘goods’ life is abandoned in favor of the good life. This should not be surprising, as philosophy can be a ‘subversive’ enterprise that challenges conformity and conventional mores.<sup>768</sup> Because authentic virtue always orients the moral agent towards a true *telos*, it undermines any ethos oriented towards immoral ends.<sup>769</sup> The practice of genuine virtue will, therefore, be ‘at revolutionary odds’ with immoral society, ‘so that one can only be virtuous by being in systematic conflict with the established order.’<sup>770</sup> The harmonious order and moral realignment inspired by temperance stands directly against the canons of consumer culture, rousing consumers from their hypnosis and instigating a mutiny against the false *telos* of the day. So

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<sup>766</sup> Porter, ‘Perennial’, 67-8.

<sup>767</sup> See 1.1 above.

<sup>768</sup> MacIntyre, *Short History*, 2.

<sup>769</sup> MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ 4.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

often regarded as a virtue of conformity, temperance is clearly nothing of the sort. Challenging the materialism and consumerism of the day and calling the moral agent from social approbation to internal harmony, temperance is ‘a virtue of revolutionaries.’<sup>771</sup>

Promoting a revolutionary virtue will not be simple or painless. Adjudicating between different, often competing moral goods requires practical wisdom; professing and pursuing a counter-cultural lifestyle requires courage. When our children are excluded for not having the latest technology or wearing generic clothing, we begin to question our choices. When family gatherings and neighborhood functions are strained and awkward because *decorum* has been abandoned, we wonder if the cost is, perhaps, too high.

It becomes hard to take a stand against consumerism without taking a stand against the very people with whom we share our lives ...So of course we give in again and again to the pressure to conform, for otherwise we will appear not only eccentric, but rude and even heartless. In a society that despises simplicity, the virtue of temperateness can seem not so much humdrum as impossibly, and ambiguously, heroic.<sup>772</sup>

So often, persons committed to temperance are labelled ‘saints’, simultaneously praised and consigned to practical irrelevance. Yet temperance *is* heroic – the heroism of Homeric virtue in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, wherein virtue is characteristic of and defined by the heroes of battle. Temperate living is a campaign against an unhealthy way of life; it requires sacrifice, commitment, and a clear vision of the desired *telos*. It is necessary, beneficial, and clearly revolutionary.

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<sup>771</sup> MacIntyre, ‘*Sōphrosynē*,’ 11. Earlier he notes that *sōphrosynē* is often regarded as ‘a conformist virtue’ (2).

<sup>772</sup> Margaret Atkins, ‘Temperateness, Justice, and Chocolate’, *Priests and People* 17:10 (2003), 381-5 (384).



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