

QUESTION 110

The Essence of God's Grace

Next we have to consider God's grace with respect to its essence. On this topic there are four questions: (1) Is grace an entity of some sort in the soul (*utrum gratia ponat aliquid in anima*)? (2) Is grace a quality? (3) Does grace differ from an infused virtue? (4) What is the subject of grace?

Article 1

Is grace an entity of some sort in the soul?

It seems that grace is not an entity of any sort in the soul:

Objection 1: A man is said to have the grace or favor of another man (*habere gratiam hominis*) in the same way that he is said to have the grace or favor of God (*habere gratiam Dei*); hence, Genesis 39:21 says, "The Lord gave to Joseph favor (*gratiam*) in the eyes of the chief keeper of the prison." But the fact that a man is said to have the grace or favor of some other man does not bespeak any sort of entity in the one who has the grace or favor of the other; instead, it bespeaks some kind of act of acceptance (*acceptatio*) in the one whose grace or favor he has. Therefore, the fact that a man is said to have the grace or favor of God does not bespeak any sort of entity in the soul; instead, the only thing it signifies is God's act of acceptance.

Objection 2: Just as the soul gives life to the body, so God gives life to the soul; hence, Deuteronomy 30:20 says, "He is your life." But the soul gives life to the body without mediation. Therefore, there is likewise nothing that falls between God and the soul. Therefore, grace is not a created entity of any sort in the soul.

Objection 3: A Gloss on Romans 1:7 ("Grace to you and peace") says, "Grace, i.e., the remission of sins ..." But the remission of sins is not an entity of any sort in the soul; rather, it exists in God alone by virtue of his not imputing the sin—this according to Psalm 31:2 ("Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin"). Therefore, neither is grace an entity of any sort in the soul.

But contrary to this: Light is an entity of some sort in the thing that is illuminated. But grace is a sort of light of the soul; hence, in *De Natura et Gratia* Augustine says, "Light deservedly deserts the defamer of the law, and the one who is thus deserted becomes blind." Therefore, grace is an entity of some sort in the soul.

I respond: In the common manner of speaking, there are three ways in which 'grace' is ordinarily understood:

(a) In one way, it is taken for someone's love (*pro dilectione*), as when we say, "The soldier has the king's grace or favor" (*miles habet gratiam regis*), i.e., he is in the king's good graces (*rex habet eum gratum*).

(b) In a second way, it is taken for a gift that is given for free (*pro aliquo dono gratis dato*), as when we say, "I bestow this grace or favor on you" (*hanc gratiam facio tibi*).

(c) In a third way, it is taken for acknowledging in gratitude a benefit that has been freely given (*pro recompensatione beneficii gratis dati*), in accord with which we are said to give thanks for, or 'say grace' over, gifts (*secundum quod dicimur agere gratias beneficiorum*).

Of these three, the second depends on the first; for the result of the love by which someone holds another in his favor or in his good graces is that he freely expends something on his behalf (*ex amore quo aliquis alium gratum habet procedit quod aliquid ei gratis impendat*). On the other hand, the third proceeds from the second, since the action of saying grace or giving thanks (*gratiarum actio*) arises from the benefits that have been freely bestowed.

Thus, with respect to the last two, it is clear that grace is an entity in the one who receives the grace—in the case of the former, it is the very gift that has been given for free, and in the case of the

latter, it is the act of recognizing the gift.

On the other hand, as regards the first, there is a difference to be noted between God's grace or favor and a man's grace or favor. For given that a creature's good comes from God's will, it is from the love by which God loves a creature that any good at all flows into the creature. By contrast, a man's will is moved by a good that already preexists in things, and from this it follows that a man's love is not a total cause of the thing's goodness, but instead presupposes that goodness either in part or in whole.

Therefore, it is clear that some good or other, caused in a creature at some time, follows upon any sort of love on God's part—even if not a good that is coeternal with God's eternal love. And God's love for creatures is thought of as differing, depending on the differences among the sorts of goods:

One sort of love is a *general love* in accord with which God "loves all the things that exist," as Wisdom 11:25 puts it, and in accord with which natural *esse* is bestowed on all things.

The other sort of love is a *special love* in accord with which God draws the rational creature beyond the status of his nature to a participation in the divine good. And with this love He is said to love someone absolutely speaking (*dicitur aliquem diligere simpliciter*), since with this love God wills for the creature an eternal good absolutely speaking, viz., Himself. In this sense, then, what is signified by saying that a man has God's grace or favor is a supernatural entity in the man that comes from God (*significatur quiddam supernaturale in homine a Deo proveniens*).

Sometimes, however, 'God's grace' expresses God's eternal love itself, and in this sense it is also called 'the grace of predestination' insofar as God has predestined or elected (*praedestinavit sive elegit*) certain men gratuitously and not on the basis of merits; for Ephesians 1:5ff. says, "He has predestined us for adoption as his children ... unto the praise of the glory of His grace."

Reply to objection 1: Even when someone is said to have the grace or favor of a *man*, it is understood that in him there exists some entity that is held in favor by that man, just as in the case when someone is said to have the grace or favor of *God*—though in different ways. For what is held in favor by one man in another man is *presupposed* by the former's love, whereas, as has been explained, what is held in favor by God in a man is *caused* by God's love.

Reply to objection 2: God is the life of the soul in the manner of an *efficient* cause, whereas the soul is the life of the body in the manner of a *formal* cause. Now there is nothing that lies between a form and its matter, since the form on its own informs its matter or subject. By contrast, an agent informs its subject not through its substance, but through the form that it causes in the matter.

Reply to objection 3: In *Retractationes* Augustine says, "When I said that grace is the remission of sins, whereas peace lies in reconciliation with God, this should not be taken to mean that peace itself and reconciliation do not belong to general grace. Rather, it should be taken to mean the name 'grace' specifically signifies the remission of sins." Therefore, it is not just the remission of sins that belongs to grace, but many other of God's gifts as well. Moreover, as will become clear below (q. 113, a. 2), even the remission of sins does not occur without some divinely caused effect in us.

Article 2

Is grace a quality of the soul?

It seems that grace is not a quality of the soul:

Objection 1: No quality acts on its own subject, since a quality's action does not exist without the subject's action, and so it would have to be the case that the subject acts on itself. But grace acts on the soul in justifying it. Therefore, grace is not a quality.

Objection 2: A substance is more noble than a quality. But grace is more noble than the nature of the soul, since, as was explained above (q. 109), through grace we can do many things that nature is insufficient for. Therefore, grace is not a quality.

Objection 3: No quality remains after it ceases to exist in a subject. But grace remains, since it is not corrupted. For if it were corrupted, then it would return to nothingness, just as it is created *ex nihilo*—this is why it is called a “new creature” in Galatians 6:15. Therefore, grace is not a quality.

But contrary to this: A Gloss on Psalm 103:15 (“... that He might make the face cheerful with oil”) says, “Grace is the splendor of the soul, procuring holy love.” But the splendor of the soul is a certain quality, just as the beauty of the soul is. Therefore, grace is a certain quality.

I respond: As has already been explained (a. 1), when someone is said to have God’s grace or favor, what is signified is that there exists within him an effect of God’s gratuitous will. But it was explained above (q. 109, aa. 1-2 and 5) that there are two ways in which a man is assisted by God’s gratuitous will:

(a) In one way, insofar as a man’s soul is moved by God to know or to will or to do something. And in this mode the gratuitous effect is not a quality in the man, but is instead *a certain movement of the soul*; for as *Physics* 3 says, “The act of the mover in the thing moved is the movement.”

(b) In the second way, a man is assisted by God’s gratuitous will insofar as a *habitual gift* is infused into the soul by God. The reason for this is that it would be inappropriate for God to provide in a lesser way for those creatures whom He loves in order that they might have a supernatural good than for those creatures whom He loves in order that they might have a natural good. Now He provides for natural creatures in such a way that He not only moves them to their natural acts but also gives them certain forms and powers which are the principles of their acts, so that they might be inclined in their own right to acts of this sort. And so the movements by which they are moved by God become connatural to those creatures and easy for them—this according to Wisdom 8:1 (“... and [wisdom] orders all things agreeably” (*suaviter*)). Therefore, *a fortiori*, as regards those beings whom He moves in order that they might have an eternal supernatural good, He infuses into them certain forms, i.e., qualities, by which they might be moved agreeably and promptly by Him toward attaining that eternal good. And in this way the gift of grace is a certain quality.

Reply to objection 1: Insofar as grace is a quality, it is said to act on the soul not in the manner of an efficient cause, but in the manner of a formal cause—in the same way that whiteness makes something white, and justice makes someone just.

Reply to objection 2: Every substance is either (a) the very nature of the thing whose substance it is or (b) part of the nature, in the sense in which the matter or the form is called a substance. And since grace lies beyond human nature, it is impossible that it should be either the substance or the substantial form; instead, it is an accidental form that belongs to the soul itself. For what exists as the substance (*substantialiter*) in God exists as an accident (*accidentaliter*) in a soul that is participating in God’s goodness, as is clear in the case of knowledge. Accordingly, then, since the soul participates imperfectly in God’s goodness, its very participation in God’s goodness, viz., grace, has a less perfect mode of being in the soul than the soul has subsisting in itself (*gratia imperfectiori modo habet esse in anima quam anima in seipsa subsistat*). And yet grace is more noble than the nature of the soul insofar as it is an expression of or participation in God’s goodness—even if not with respect to its mode of being (*non autem quantum ad modum essendi*).

Reply to objection 3: As Boethius says, “The *esse* of an accident is *to exist in* or *to inhere in*” (*accidentis esse est inesse*). Hence, any accident is called an accident not in the sense that it itself has *esse*, but because something exists by means of it. Hence, as *Metaphysics* 7 explains, it is better to say that an accident *belongs to* an entity than that it *is* an entity (*magis dicitur esse entis quam ens*). And since the *coming into being* or *being corrupted* of an entity belongs to that which has *esse*, it follows that, properly speaking, no accident either comes into being or is corrupted; instead, an accident is said to come into being or to be corrupted insofar its subject begins to be or ceases to be actually such-and-such in accord with that accident (*secundum quod subiectum incipit vel desinit esse in actu secundum illum accidens*).

Accordingly, grace is likewise said to be ‘created’ by virtue of the fact that men are ‘created’ in

accord with it, i.e., insofar as they are constituted in a new *esse* ‘out of nothing’, i.e., not because of any merits (*secundum ipsam creantur, idest in novo esse constituuntur ex nihilo, idest non ex meritis*)—this according to Ephesians 2:10 (“... created in Christ Jesus for good works”).

Article 3

Is grace the same as a virtue?

It seems that grace is the same as a virtue (*gratia sit idem quod virtus*):

Objection 1: Augustine claims that operating grace is grace that operates through love, as it says in *De Spiritu et Littera*. But faith that operates through love is a virtue. Therefore, grace is a virtue.

Objection 2: What is defined belongs to whatever the definition belongs to. But the definitions of virtue handed down by both saints and philosophers are appropriate for grace; for grace itself makes the one who has it good and makes his action good, and it is likewise a good quality of the mind by which one lives well, etc. Therefore, grace is a virtue.

Objection 3: Grace is a certain quality. But it is clear that grace is not in the fourth species of quality, i.e., the form and abiding shape of thing, since grace does not belong to a body. Neither is it in the third species, since it is not either a passion or a passible quality—which, as *Physics 7* proves, are in the sentient part of the soul. Nor, again, is it in the second species, i.e., a natural power or weakness, since grace lies beyond the nature and is not related to the good and the bad in the way that a natural power is. Therefore, what remains is that grace is in the first species of quality, i.e., it is a habit or disposition. But habits of the mind are virtues, since, as was explained above (q. 57, aa. 1 and 2), even knowledge itself is in some sense a virtue. Therefore, grace is the same thing as a virtue.

But contrary to this: If grace is a virtue, then it would seem especially to be one of the three theological virtues. But grace is not faith or hope, since these can exist without sanctifying grace (*sine gratia gratum faciente*). Nor, likewise, is it charity, since, as Augustine says in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, “Grace precedes charity.” Therefore, grace is not a virtue.

I respond: Some have claimed that grace and virtue are the same in essence (*idem esse secundum essentiam*) and differ only conceptually (*differre secundum rationem*), so that one and the same thing is called ‘grace’ insofar as it makes man favored by God or insofar as it is given for free, whereas it is called ‘virtue’ insofar as it perfects a man for operating well. This seems to have been the opinion of the Master in *Sentences 2*.

However, if one correctly considers the concept of virtue, then this opinion cannot stand. For as the Philosopher says in *Physics 7*, a virtue is a certain disposition of what is perfect, where I am using ‘perfect’ to mean ‘disposed according to its nature’. From this it is clear that, with respect to any given thing, ‘virtue’ is said in relation to some preexisting nature, viz., when the thing in question is disposed in a way that is congruent with its nature.

Now it is clear that the virtues acquired through human acts, which were discussed above (q. 55ff.), are dispositions by which a man is appropriately disposed in relation to the nature by which he is a man. By contrast, the infused virtues dispose a man in a higher mode and with respect to a higher end, and so they must be related to some higher nature as well. Now they are related to a participated divine nature—this according to 2 Peter 1:4 (“He has given us the greatest and most precious gifts, that by them you might be made partakers in God’s nature”). And because of the reception of this nature, we are said to be generated again as sons of God.

Therefore, just as the natural light of reason is something in addition to the acquired virtues, which are called virtues in relation to the natural light itself, so too the light of grace, which is a participation in God’s nature, is something in addition to the infused virtues, which are derived from that light and are ordered toward that light. Thus, in Ephesians 5:8 the Apostle says, “At one time you were darkness, but

now you are light in the Lord. Walk, then, as children of the light.” For just as the acquired virtues perfect a man in order that he might walk in a way congruent with the light of natural reason, so the infused virtues perfect a man in order that he might walk in a way congruent with the light of grace.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine is using the name ‘grace’ for faith operating through love, since the act of faith operating through love is the first act in which sanctifying (or habitual) grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) is made manifest.

Reply to objection 2: ‘Good’ as posited in the definition of virtue expresses a fittingness with respect to a preexistent nature, either an essential nature or a participated nature. But this is not the way in which ‘good’ is attributed to grace. Rather, as has been explained, ‘good’ is attributed to grace as a *root* of goodness in man.

Reply to objection 3: Grace is traced back to the first species of quality. Yet it is not the same as a virtue; instead, it is a certain habitual condition (*habitus*) that is presupposed by the infused virtues as their source and root (*sicut earum principium et radix*).

Article 4

Is it the essence of the soul that is the subject of grace?

It seems that it not the essence of the soul that is the subject of grace (*gratia non sit in essentia animae sicut in subiecto*):

Objection 1: In *Hypognosticon* Augustine says that grace is related to the will, or to free choice, “as a rider to his horse.” But as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 83, a. 2), the will, or free choice, is a certain power. Therefore, it is a power of the soul that grace has as its subject (*gratia est in potentia animae sicut in subiecto*).

Objection 2: As Augustine says, “Man’s merits begin with grace.” But merit consists in an act that proceeds from a power. Therefore, it seems that grace is the perfection of some power of the soul.

Objection 3: If the essence of the soul were the proper subject of grace, then the soul would have to have a capacity for grace insofar as it has an essence. But this is false, since then it would follow that every soul has a capacity for grace. Therefore, it is not the essence of the soul that is the proper subject of grace.

Objection 4: The soul’s essence is prior to its powers. But what is prior is such that one can think of it without thinking of what is posterior to it. Therefore, it will follow that one can think of grace in the soul without thinking of any part or power of the soul—more specifically, without thinking of the will or the intellect or anything of this sort. But this is absurd.

But contrary to this: Through grace we are generated again as sons of God. But generation terminates in an essence prior to terminating in its powers. Therefore, grace is in the essence of the soul prior to its being in the soul’s powers.

I respond: This question depends on the preceding one. For if grace is the same as a virtue, then it has to have a power of the soul as its subject (*nesesse est quod sit in potentia animae sicut in subiecto*), since, as was explained above (q. 56, a. 1), it is a power of the soul that is the proper subject of a virtue. By contrast, if grace differs from a virtue, then one cannot claim that the subject of grace is a power of the soul, since, as was explained above (q. 55, a. 1 and q. 56, a. 1), every perfection of a power of the soul has the character of a virtue.

Hence, what remains is that just as grace is prior to virtue, so too it has a subject that is prior to the powers of the soul—in such a way, namely, that it is in the essence of the soul. For just as by his intellectual power a man participates in God’s cognition through the virtue of faith, and just as by his power of will he participates in God’s love through the virtue of charity, so, too, by the nature of his soul

he participates in God's nature, in accord with a certain likeness, by being in a way generated or created again (*per quamdam regenerationem sive recreationem*).

Reply to objection 1: Just as the soul's powers, which are the principles of its works, flow from its essence, so too the virtues flow from grace itself into the soul's powers, and through these virtues the powers are moved to their acts. Accordingly, grace is related to the will as a mover to what is moved—which is the relation of a rider to a horse—and not as an accident to a subject.

Reply to objection 2: This makes clear the reply to the second objection. For grace is a principle of meritorious works through the mediation of the virtues, in the same way that the essence of the soul is the principle of vital operations by the mediation of the powers.

Reply to objection 3: The soul is the subject of grace insofar as it is in the species *intellectual* (or *rational*) nature. But the soul is not constituted in this species by any power, since the powers are natural properties of the soul that follow upon the species. And so it is in its essence that the [rational] soul differs in species from other kinds of soul, viz., the souls of brute animals and of plants. For this reason, it does not follow that if the human soul's essence is the subject of grace, then any soul whatsoever can be the subject of grace. For being the subject of grace is fitting for the essence of the soul insofar as the soul belongs to this particular species (*inquantum est talis speciei*).

Reply to objection 4: Since the powers of the soul are natural properties that follow from the species, the soul cannot exist without them. But even if it did exist without them, the soul would still be called *intellectual* (or *rational*) in accord with its species—not because it would have those powers in actuality, but because of the species of the sort of essence from which the relevant powers are apt to flow.