

To what extent can the difference between virtues in general and the "theological virtues" in particular be expressed by following the same line of thought I've followed in distinguishing original and actual sin, as well as original and actual righteousness?

A virtue, in general, can be distinguished from acts expressive of the virtue as the disposition to perform such acts, and, in this sense, a certain kind of character, are distinguished from the acts themselves. This means that one can be a virtuous person, or have a virtuous character, even if, in a particular case, one fails to act in a virtuous way, or to perform a virtuous act. It also means, conversely, that one can perform a particular virtuous act, or act in a virtuous way, even if one is not a virtuous person, or doesn't have a virtuous character.

On my account, however, there is no way of being in the state or condition of original sin except by actually sinning, even as one cannot actually sin without thereby being in the state or condition of original sin. Correspondingly, one cannot exist in the state or condition of grace or faith, any more than in that of original righteousness, except by actually trusting and being loyal, even as one cannot trust and be loyal without thereby being in the state or condition of grace or faith, if not of original righteousness. Assuming, then, as I do, that the necessary conditions of faith also apply to hope and love, one could make parallel statements about each of them. Thus, in the case of all three of the "theological virtues," there is the same paradoxical relation of condition and act, indicative and imperative, that does not characterize virtues and the acts expressive of them generally.

This is tantamount to denying, presumably, that the "theological virtues" are really "virtues" at all—at least in the same univocal sense of the word.

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