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Aquinas's Ethics: the Infused Virtues and the Indwelling Holy Spirit

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Abstract

This paper explores Aquinas's ethics. For Aquinas, the moral life begins with a surrender to God on the part of a person who comes to faith. That surrender includes a change in the person's will from the state of resisting God's love and grace to quiescence, the cessation of resistance. Once a person's will is in this quiescent state, God infuses grace into his will. On Aquinas's views, in an instant this grace moves the person's will to the will of faith. In that same instant, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell in him and also brings into him also all the infused virtues, as well as all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. The paper explores Aquinas's claims about the infused virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and it argues that for Aquinas the moral life is first and foremost a matter of having a right second-personal relationship to God.

Keywords: Aquinas; Virtues; Holy Spirit; grace; ethics

1. Introduction

Taking Aquinas's ethics as fundamentally Aristotelian has become almost scholarly dogma by now, and there is some reason for it. Aquinas's ethics is a virtue ethics, centered around a list of the virtues that includes some which, at least on the surface, appear to be identical to those on Aristotle's list: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. On the Aristotelian ethics that many scholars suppose Aquinas accepts, a moral virtue is a habit which is acquired through practice and which disposes the will to act in accordance with reason in varying circumstances.

Some opposition to this view of Aquinas's ethics has begun to find a voice in the scholarly literature. So, for example, Jean Porter says

[There is] a ... tendency among Aquinas scholars, ... misleading and ... prevalent, ... to read Aquinas as if he not only baptized Aristotle, but is himself little more than Aristotle baptized.¹

¹Jean Porter, 'Right Reason and the Love of God: The parameters of Aquinas' Moral Theology', *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, (Notre Dame, IN: University

More recently, Andrew Pinsent has argued convincingly that Aquinas's ethics is not Aristotelian at all but rather second-personal in character.² In this paper, I want to add to this literature by showing the concomitant account of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the infused virtues and gifts.

2. The Indwelling Holy Spirit: the Infused Virtues and the Gifts

To understand Aquinas's ethics, it helps to begin with the central place Aquinas assigns to love. In discussing the virtues, Aquinas asks whether it is possible to have the infused virtue of love without also having the moral virtues; and, in response, he says, 'All the moral virtues are infused simultaneously together with love'.³ In fact, he is emphatic that there can be no moral virtue at all without the infused virtue of love. He says,

It is written: 'He who does not love abides in death' (I John 3:14). Now the spiritual life is perfected⁴ by the virtues, since it is by them that we live rightly, as Augustine states (*De libero arbitrio* ii). Therefore, the virtues cannot be without love.⁵

Because he thinks that all the virtues are infused and also accepts a unity of the virtues thesis, it seems to follow that for Aquinas all the virtues are infused at once, in an instant. And this is in fact what he does think.

On his view, a person begins the process of a life in grace through justification when he comes to faith; and the transition to justification in faith occurs in a datable, discernible instant. So, for example, Aquinas says,

the endpoints of justification are grace and the privation of grace. Between these there is no mean... and therefore the transition from one to the other is in an instant, ... And so the whole justification of an impious person occurs in an instant....⁶

In this same instant, it is also the case that all the virtues are simultaneously infused.

Actually, Aquinas supposes that in the one datable instant at which a person Jerome comes to faith, not only are all the virtues infused into Jerome, but the Holy Spirit is also given to Jerome. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit begins in this instant.⁷ In the

of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 167-191. See also her essay 'Virtues and Vices', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

³ST I-II q.65 a.3.

⁴To say that the spiritual life is perfected by the virtues is to say only that the infusing of the virtues contributes to the process of being perfected in righteousness, not that the process ends with the infusion of the virtues. All the virtues are infused in the first instant of faith, but they can exist in a person with contrary dispositions as well, as the remainder of this chapter will make clear.

⁵ST I-II q.65 a.2 s.c.

⁶Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (QDV) q. 28 a.9 reply. (The translation is mine.)

⁷In the *Summa contra Gentiles* (SCG), Aquinas makes clear that, in his view, God himself, the whole Trinity, indwells a person of faith when that person has the indwelling Holy Spirit: 'Since the love by which we love God is in us by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit himself must also be in us...Therefore, since we are

instant of a human person's acquiring faith and becoming justified, the Holy Spirit comes into that person. When that happens, the indwelling Holy Spirit unites that person with God to some nascent degree; and in so doing, it makes God available to him to know, to love, and to enjoy.

When Aquinas describes the Holy Spirit, he says that the name of the person of the Holy Spirit is 'Gift'. In saying this, he is validating a claim of Augustine's: 'the gift of the Holy Spirit is nothing but the Holy Spirit'.⁸ To explain this claim, Aquinas says,

We are said to possess what we can freely use or enjoy as we please.... A rational creature does sometimes attain to this, ... so as freely to know God truly and to love God rightly. Hence a rational creature alone can possess the divine person. [But] this must be given to a rational creature from God, for that is said to be given to us which we have from another source. And so a divine person can be given and can be a gift.⁹

This is a position Aquinas maintains and develops in many places. So, for example, in commenting on Paul's wish for the Ephesians, 'that you may able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of the love of God]', Aquinas says,

It is evident from John 14:21 that God reveals himself to one who loves... and that he shows himself to one who believes.... Now it should be noted that sometimes to comprehend means 'to enclose', and then it is necessary that the one comprehending totally contains within himself what is comprehended. But sometimes it means 'to apprehend', and then it affirms a remoteness or a distance and yet implies proximity. No created intellect can comprehend God in the first manner. But the second kind [of comprehension] is one of the gifts [of the Holy Spirit], and this is what the Apostle means when he says [to the Ephesians] 'that you may comprehend'—namely, that you may enjoy the presence of God and know him intimately.¹⁰

In Romans 5:5, Paul says 'the love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us'. In one of the many places in which Aquinas comments on this line, he says,

The love of God can be taken in two ways. In one way, for the love by which God loves us; in another, for the love by which we love God. Both these loves of God

made lovers of God by the Holy Spirit, and every beloved is in the lover...by the Holy Spirit necessarily the Father and the Son dwell in us also' (SCG IV c.21). Here and elsewhere I like and therefore have used the translation of Anton Charles Pegis (reprinted 1991), though I have felt free to modify it where I thought I could do better.

⁸ST I q.38 a.1 s.c.

⁹ST I q.38 a.1 corpus.

¹⁰*Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, tr. F.R. Larcher and M.L. Lamb, ed. John Mortensen and E. Alarcon, (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012) C.3, l. 5. I like and therefore have used throughout the translations of this series from the Aquinas Institute, but I have felt free to modify it if I thought I could do better.

are poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. For the Holy Spirit... to be given to us is our being brought to participate in the love who is the Holy Spirit.¹¹

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Aquinas characterizes the relation of the Holy Spirit to the person in whom the Spirit dwells this way: 'The Father ... will give the Holy Spirit, who is the Consoler, since he is the Spirit of love. It is love that causes spiritual consolation and joy...'.¹² And in commenting on a line in Ephesians, where Paul says that the Ephesians have the promise of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), Aquinas says, 'The Holy Spirit is given with a certain promise, since by the very fact that he is given to us we become the children of God. For through the Holy Spirit we are made one with Christ'.¹³

According to Aquinas, then, in the first instant of faith, every person of faith comes to have the Holy Spirit itself indwelling in her in an incipient union of love. And this is not the end of the story. The Holy Spirit's coming brings with it, in that one and the same datable instant, not only all the infused virtues but also all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused dispositions in the will that render a person attentive to God and apt to follow the inner promptings of God. Speaking of these gifts, Aquinas says, 'These perfections are called "gifts", not only because they are infused by God, but also because by them a person is disposed to become amenable to the divine inspiration...'.¹⁵ And a little later he says, 'the gifts are perfections of a human being, whereby he is disposed so as to be amenable to the promptings of God'.¹⁶ There are seven such gifts: piety, fortitude, fear of the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge. And there are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, benevolence, mildness, fidelity, modesty, continence, and chastity.¹⁷ About these, Aquinas says,

Among the fruits of the Holy Spirit, we count love, since the Holy Spirit himself is love. And that is why it is written (Rom.5:5): 'The love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us'. The necessary result of [this] love ... is joy, because every lover rejoices at being united to the beloved.

¹¹*Commentary on the letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, trans. F. R. Larcher, ed. J. Mortensen and F. Alarcon (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012) C. 5, l. 1.

¹²*Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, , trans. F. R. Larcher, ed. The Aquinas Institute, (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013), C. 14, l. 4, p. 249.

¹³*Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians*, tr. F.R. Larcher and M.L. Lamb, ed. John Mortensen and E. Alarcon, (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), C. 1, l. 5.

¹⁴For a detailed defense of these claims, see my 'The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions', *Faith and Philosophy* 28.1 (2011): 29-43.

¹⁵ST I-II q.68 a.1.

¹⁶ST I-II q.68 a.2.

¹⁷As Aquinas explains the first five fruits of the Holy Spirit, they are in fact all consequences of shared love between a human person and God. The remaining seven have to do, one way or another, with the love of one's neighbor understood as beloved of God or with suitable love of oneself and one's body. See, for example, ST I-II q.70 a.3.

Now love has always the actual presence of God whom it loves... and that is why the consequence of love is joy. And the perfection of joy is peace...¹⁸

On Aquinas's views, then, in the first instant of coming to faith, a person Jerome will have present not only with himself but even within himself the God who is his beloved. That is why the list of the fruits of this union begins with love, joy, and peace — love, because his beloved, who loves him, is present to him; joy, because of the dynamic interaction with his beloved, who is present to him in second-personal ways; and peace, because his heart already has what it most desires, his beloved, present to him.¹⁹ As Aquinas explains it, there is no life in grace without the indwelling Holy Spirit, with its concomitant love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of this union, as well as all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and all the infused virtues.

3. Two Problems and a Solution

Here it is important to pause and take stock, because, manifestly, there are two problems with the preceding account of the thesis that all the virtues are infused at once when a person comes to faith. The first problem is that this thesis about the virtues seems highly counter-intuitive or just plain false. It seems that no one gains all the virtues at once, but that, on the contrary, there are people who have only some virtues and not others. And the second problem is that this account seems to be contradicted by the well-established theological view of sanctification as occurring gradually over the course of a lifetime. If all the virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are infused at once, how could it also be true that sanctification is gradual?

To see the solution to the first problem, it is important to recognize what the preceding passages make abundantly evident, and what Pinsent has also argued for in detail, namely, that, on Thomistic ethics, the essence of moral excellence is second-personal.²⁰ An Aristotelian virtue is an intrinsic characteristic, a property that can be gotten and preserved by an individual acting by himself as an individual agent. But the Thomistic understanding of moral excellence requires a much different characterization. As is clear from Aquinas's emphasis on love as the foundational virtue, the virtue without which no other virtue is possible, a human person's moral excellence is a function of her relation to God and other persons.

The quotations above demonstrate that, for Aquinas, it is open to every human person to have a second-personal connection of love with God, and every person who is in grace has such a connection. In relationship with God, a human person can know God's presence and something of God's mind in a direct and intuitive way that is in

¹⁸ST I-II q.70 a.3 corpus.

¹⁹For an excellent discussion of this subject in connection with Aquinas's ethics, see Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), especially ch. 4, in which Pinsent likens the fruition of second-person relatedness, an 'abiding in' the other, to a state of resonance.

²⁰For more discussion of the nature of the second-personal, see my *Wandering in Darkness*, ch. 6.

some respects like the interaction between human persons united in shared attention. On Aquinas's views,

There is one general way by which God is in all things by essence, power, and presence, [namely,] as a cause in the effects participating in his goodness. But in addition to this way there is a special way [in which God is in a thing by essence, power, and presence] which is appropriate for a rational creature, in whom God is said to be as the thing known is in the knower and the beloved is in the lover.... In this special way, God is not only said to be in a rational creature but even to dwell in that creature²¹

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are a manifestation and an outgrowth of a second-personal relationship of love with God on the part of a person, Paula. Every gift of the Holy Spirit has its source in God's indwelling in Paula; and, in addition to its other functions, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit renders Paula attentive to God and apt to follow the inner promptings of God. In fact, for Aquinas, the Holy Spirit so fills a person with a sense of the love of God and God's nearness that joy is one of the principal effects of the Holy Spirit.²² Aquinas says,

the ultimate perfection, by which a person is made perfect inwardly, is joy, which stems from the presence of what is loved. Whoever has the love of God, however, already has what he loves, as is said in 1 John 4:16: 'whoever abides in the love of God abides in God, and God abides in him'.²³ And joy wells up from this.²⁴

And, in *Summa contra Gentiles* (SCG), expanding on the idea that a person of faith is friends with God, Aquinas says:

In the first place, it is proper to friendship to converse with one's friend.... It is also a property of friendship that one take delight in a friend's presence, that one rejoice in his words and deeds... and it is especially in our sorrows that we hasten to our friends for consolation. Since then the Holy Spirit constitutes us God's friends and makes God dwell in us and us dwell in God,²⁵ it follows that through the Holy Spirit we have joy in God.²⁶

On Aquinas's view, a second-personal connection of love between two human persons enables them to have what Aquinas calls 'connaturality' with each other.²⁷

²¹ST I q.43 a.3.

²²See, for example, *Commentary on the letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, trans. F. R. Larcher, ed. J. Mortensen and F. Alarcon (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012) C.5, l.1.

²³It is perhaps worth highlighting here that the biblical text implies a mutual indwelling between God and a person in grace, and Aquinas understands the biblical text in this way.

²⁴*Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians*, tr. F.R. Larcher and M.L. Lamb, ed. John Mortensen and E. Alarcon, (Lander, Wyo.: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), C 5, l.6.

²⁵At the risk of overdoing it, I want to highlight here as well Aquinas's supposition that there is mutual indwelling between God and person in grace.

²⁶SCG IV c.23.

²⁷See, in this connection, ST I-II q.27 a.3 and q.28 a.1.

For Aquinas, as the passages above make clear, it is possible for a human person also to have connaturality with God.²⁸ Because of Aquinas's commitment to the unity of the virtues thesis, which for him encompasses also the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, this second-personal connection and the resulting connaturality with God is one or another degree of the optimal ethical condition for a human person. In this condition, a person in grace will not need to try to reason things out as regards ethics or struggle on her own to acquire good moral habits. She will be disposed to think and act in morally appropriate ways because of her second-personal interaction with God.

And so there is a solution to the first problem for Aquinas's view. If we think of a virtue as an acquired moral excellence, then it is abundantly clear that no one gains all the virtues at once. But if we think of virtue as Aquinas does, as one or another manifestation of a union (in some incipient degree) with God, then it is clear that a person can gain the moral excellences all at once in a datable instant, the instant in which one comes to faith and receives the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The counter-intuitive character of Aquinas's unity of the virtues thesis is further reduced by seeing that, on Aquinas's view, the virtues can co-exist with contrary dispositions in a person.²⁹ The possibility of fragmentation in a human psyche means that the mere presence of morally excellent dispositions is not enough by itself to render a person internally integrated around the good. So, for example, Aquinas says, 'sometimes the habits of moral virtue experience difficulty in their works by reason of certain contrary dispositions remaining from previous acts'.³⁰ As Aquinas sees it, then, although a person cannot acquire *morally excellent* dispositions by his own actions, through repeated acts of a *morally wrong* sort he can by himself acquire dispositions inclining him to the opposite of virtue. And in infusing all the moral virtues, God does not thereby remove the contrary dispositions at the same time.

With this last clarification, the counter-intuitive appearance of Aquinas's unity of the virtues thesis is shown to be mistaken. And this resolution of the first problem with Aquinas's ethics sets up the solution to the second problem as well. Although all the virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are infused at the same time in the first instant of the Holy Spirit's indwelling a person of faith, nonetheless the old acquired sinful dispositions remain; and they can make it difficult – *not* impossible, but difficult – to act in moral ways. It is not so difficult to understand, then, that sanctification can take such a long time and go so gradually, even though all the virtues, gifts, and fruits are infused at once in the first moment of faith.

²⁸For more discussion of this notion, see my 'Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony', in *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*, edited by Timothy O'Connor and Laura Frances Goins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 204-230.

²⁹Just as the will can be divided against itself as regards desires, so it can also be divided against itself as regards dispositions. The infused disposition for temperance in general can co-exist in the will with a long-established habit of gluttony, for example.

³⁰ST I-II q.65 a.3 ad 2.

4. God's Action on the Will

This solution to these two problems with Aquinas's account of ethics³¹ raises another problem, however: if God can infuse moral virtues into the will of a person Jerome, then why does God not also simultaneously remove all contrary, morally wrong dispositions from Jerome's will? Then sanctification could take place in the same instant that the Holy Spirit comes to be indwelling, and there is an infusion of all the virtues, gifts, and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The first thing to see in this connection is Aquinas's insistence that *nothing* operates on a human will with efficient causation. For example, Aquinas canvasses the necessity involved in the operation of each of the four Aristotelian causes, including the efficient or agent cause (as he sometimes calls it); and he argues that there can be no agent or efficient causation on the will, because any such causation is, in his view, coercive. As he puts it, 'the necessity of coercion is entirely repugnant to the will. ... it is impossible for something to be coerced or violent *simpliciter* and [also] voluntary'.³² Elsewhere he says,

if the will is moved by any external principle, the motion will be violent.

By being moved by an external principle, I mean a principle that moves in the manner of an agent and not in the manner of an end. But the violent is altogether repugnant to the voluntary. It is therefore impossible that the will be moved by an external principle as an agent cause. Rather every motion of the will must proceed from an interior principle.³³

Aquinas does not waver from this conviction even when it comes to divinely infused grace. So, for example, he says,

God moves everything in accordance with its own manner.... And so he also moves human beings to justice in accordance with the condition of human nature. But in accordance with his own nature a human being has free choice. And so in a human being who has the use of free choice, there is no motion from God to justice without a motion of free choice.³⁴

In SCG, Aquinas says,

Now it might seem to someone that a human being is compelled to some good action by the divine aid [of grace].... But it is plainly shown that this is not

³¹Clearly, there are many more problems that arise in connection with Aquinas's account, perhaps most obviously the question whether a position which implies that only Christians are moral people is itself morally intolerable. What helps in this connection is the recognition that for Aquinas, as for Karl Rahner, there are people who are rightly related to God in this second-personal way even if they have never heard of Christianity or even if they have heard of it and reject it entirely. It is the right relationship to God, implicit or tacit, that makes a person moral, not membership in a religious club. (In this connection, see also footnote 36 above.) For further discussion of this and related issues, see my *Aquinas*, chs. 12 and 13, and *Wandering in Darkness*, ch. 8. I will also return to this issue in the section on exclusivism in Chapter 8.

³²ST I, q.82 a.1.

³³SCG III.88.

³⁴ST I-II q.113 a.3.

true. For divine providence provides for all things in accordance with their own manner... But it is characteristic of a human being (and every rational nature) that he acts voluntarily and is master of his own acts..., and compulsion is contrary to this. Therefore, God does not compel a human being to good action by his aid [of grace].³⁵

And in *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (QDV) Aquinas sums up his position by saying, 'God can change the will with necessity, but he cannot compel it'.³⁶ But here we need to pause. What does it mean to say that God can change the will with necessity but cannot compel it? If omnipotent God changes something with necessity, how could it possibly be true that God does not also compel it?

Aquinas himself answers this question in some detail, and it is worth quoting his answer at length. He says,

to will something is to be inclined to it. But compulsion or violence is contrary to the inclination of the thing compelled. Therefore, when God moves the will, he brings it about that an inclination succeeds a previous inclination in such a way that the first is removed and the second remains. And so that to which God leads the will is not contrary to an inclination now existent but rather to an inclination previously inhering [in the will]. And so there is no violence or compulsion.

Similarly, there is in a stone an inclination to a downward place, because of its heaviness; and while this inclination remains, if the stone is thrown upward there will be violence. If, however, God removed from the stone the inclination of heaviness and gave it an inclination of lightness, then its upward motion would not be violent for it. In this way, a change of motion can be without violence. [And] this is the way in which we should understand that God changes the will without its being the case that God compels the will....

God changes the will in two ways. In one way, by moving it only, as when he moves the will to will something, without impressing any form on the will, as when he brings it about, without the addition of any disposition, that a human being wills something that he previously did not will.³⁷ In another way, [God changes the will] by impressing some form on the will itself. For just as from the very nature which God gave to the will the will is inclined to will something... so too from something added on to it, as grace or virtue is, the soul is further inclined to will something to which it was not previously determined by a natural inclination.

³⁵SCG III.148.

³⁶QDV 22.8.

³⁷What Aquinas has in mind with this description of the first way in which God changes the will is the subject of some discussion, which I cannot canvass in passing here. But my own view is that the best clue to his meaning is given by the lines in remainder of the paragraph, namely, that in giving the will a nature God puts a particular will (the will to happiness, as Aquinas holds in other texts) into the will. Whatever is at issue in this first way, however, is not the way in which Aquinas thinks God changes the will when God infuses grace into the will, and so I will leave consideration of this part of Aquinas's account to one side in what follows.

This added-on inclination is sometimes complete and sometimes incomplete. When it is complete, it brings about a necessary inclination for that which it determines in such a way that the will is inclined by nature to desire the end of necessity, as happens among the blessed....But sometimes the added-on form is not complete in every way, as is the case with wayfarers.³⁸ And then the will is inclined because of the added-on form, but not of necessity.³⁹

Aquinas is here calling attention to what he takes to be an important difference in the ways in which God can change the will. But just what is this difference, and why does it matter?

The example Aquinas gives having to do with the motion of a stone is helpful in this regard. On Aquinas's view, a stone is configured in such a way that it is inclined to fall downward. If the stone is thrown upward while it still has this configuration, then some violence or compulsion is exercised on the stone, because the stone is moved contrary to its own inclination or configuration. But it is possible to change the configuration of the stone. The configuration that makes the stone inclined to fall downward could be removed by God, and the stone could instead be given a new configuration, an inclination to move upward. In that case, the stone would presumably be like fire; it would be naturally disposed to move upward. If God were to alter the configuration of the stone in this way, then he would change the stone in such a way as to make the stone move upward. But now the upward motion would not occur as a result of any compulsion or violence on God's part.

In the same way, Aquinas emphasizes in one place after another that God's giving of grace is not simply God's willing that a human will actually will something or other. Rather, it is God's infusing of a form, the form of grace, after a previous form in the human will has been lost. And because a human being is capable of voluntary action, as a stone is not, the previous form is not something taken away by God, but rather something abandoned by a human person himself in consequence of surrendering to God. And so, on Aquinas's view, 'grace does not expel guilt in the manner of an efficient cause (*effective*) but in the manner of a formal cause (*formaliter*).'⁴⁰

The great importance of the distinction between the exercise of efficient causation *versus* the exercise of formal causation on a human will can readily be seen by recognizing its implications as regards the freedom of the will. If God were to act on Jerome's will with efficient causation, then it would be entirely up to God which configuration there is in Jerome's will. But because, on Aquinas's view, God acts on the human will only with formal causation in the giving of grace, then, in fact, what configuration there is in Jerome's will is ultimately up to Jerome even though the configuration Jerome has in grace is given to Jerome's will by God. If Jerome were not to cease resisting God's grace, then the gift of grace would not be given to Jerome. God might offer Jerome grace continually, but God will not in fact put this grace in Jerome's will while Jerome is resisting it.

Furthermore, even though God acts directly on Jerome's will in the giving of grace, Jerome nonetheless has alternative possibilities with regard to grace. That is

³⁸By 'wayfarers' Aquinas means people in grace in this life.

³⁹QDV 22.8 reply.

⁴⁰QDV 28.7 ad 5.

because it is up to Jerome alone whether he resists grace or ceases resisting grace. Consequently, although the configuration in Jerome's will when he accepts grace and comes to faith is a form given to the will by God, so that Pelagianism is ruled out, it is still true that Jerome has free will, even in the libertarian sense of 'free', with regard to grace. Ultimately, the one responsible for whether or not Jerome has grace is Jerome.

These reflections further support the claim that sanctification is a gradual process even though all the virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit are infused into a person simultaneously, and they explain why God does not immediately remove all the old morally wrong dispositions that a person acquired before coming to faith. The grace that is given in the infusion of the virtues and the gifts adds a configuration to the will where the will is open to receive it. But this grace does not by itself expel any other already existing morally wrong dispositions built up in Jerome by his past bad actions. If grace did expel those morally wrong dispositions, then God's infusion of grace would constitute efficient causation on Jerome's will, expelling a configuration already present in Jerome and substituting a new one. Instead, however, God's infusion of grace exercises only formal causation on Jerome's will.

So God adds a configuration only to the part of Jerome's will that lacks a configuration; the infusion of grace adds a form where there is a privation of a form, and not where there is a form still present. But whether there is such a privation of form or not, however, is up to Jerome, because Jerome can resist grace or simply cease resisting it. Consequently, although all the good in Jerome's will is a result of God's infusion of grace, which introduces new forms into Jerome's will, nonetheless Jerome is ultimately responsible for whether or not God introduces this grace into Jerome's will. And so Jerome's will is free even when God infuses grace into Jerome's will.

5. Conclusion

With this last clarification, the counter-intuitive appearance of Aquinas's view of the infused virtues is shown to be mistaken. For Aquinas, a morally excellent life begins with a surrender to God's love on the part of a person, Jerome, as Jerome is coming to faith. Once Jerome surrenders in this way, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell in Jerome. The infused virtues that result from this beginning are essentially relational, and so is their goal. It may be true that for Aristotle the moral life is a matter of living in accordance with reason and disciplining the passions so that at best they help an agent live in accordance with reason. But things are very different when it comes to Aquinas's theory of the ethical life. For Aquinas, the point of the morally excellent life is not the possession of intrinsic, morally desirable properties in a human person. The point is rather the establishment and deepening of a relationship of love between a human person and God. That is why love is foundational to the ethical life, and that is also why all the infused virtues together with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit come to a person in grace at once. On Aquinas's view, the moral life is not possible without the indwelling Holy Spirit, and any moral virtue requires all of the virtues as well as all the gifts and the fruits.

The moral life is thus an outgrowth and a manifestation of a second-personal connection to God. Every virtue, gift, and fruit has its source in the Holy Spirit's indwelling in a human person, which fills a person with a sense of the love of God and God's

nearness, so that joy is one of the principal effects of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ As Aquinas explains in commenting on a line in the Letter to the Philippians, ‘When [Paul] says “the Lord is near”, he points out the cause of joy, because a person rejoices at the nearness of his friend’.⁴²

The idea that the heart of ethics is second-personal has most recently been called to the attention of philosophers by Stephen Darwall,⁴³ though in the past it has often been associated with Levinas. At least Darwall’s work illustrates that it is possible to have an ethics that is both secular and also centered on the second-person. As this paper shows, an emphasis on the second-personal is central to Aquinas’s ethics, too. For Aquinas, however, unlike Darwall, God is one of the relata in the second-personal relationships that ground ethics. On Aquinas’s account, to be a moral person is first and foremost a matter of having a right second-personal relationship to God.

⁴¹See, for example, *In Rom* 5.1.

⁴²*Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians*, tr. F. R. Larcher, ed. J. Mortensen and F. Alarcon (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012) C.4, l.1

⁴³Stephen Darwall, *The Second-person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

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