

William C. Mattison III, *Growing in Virtue: Aquinas on Habit*

(Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023), pp. 264. \$49.95.

Rebecca DeYoung

Calvin University, Grand Rapids, MI, USA (rebecca.deyoung@calvin.edu)

William Mattison's new book fills a notable gap in the existing excellent scholarly accounts of Aquinas on virtue, treating virtue development and growth (as well as its converse – the loss of virtue).

Mattison relies on a three-part rubric of progressive actualisation throughout the book (p. 7). The human person's natural powers count as 'level one'. These powers (e.g. intellect, will, the sensory appetite) are underdetermined by general inclinations, so they need to be perfected by training. Habits, or 'level two', direct those powers towards more specific goods, in view of a last end. Acts, 'level three', count as their most determinate manifestation. Mattison's developmental account of Aquinas' thought therefore first treats humans' natural powers, describes how dispositions and social customs arise in them and shows how they differ from habits proper (chapters 1–3). Chapters 4 and 5 cover the acquired virtues and their development, and chapters 6 and 7 deal with the infused virtues and their development. Using the rubric, Mattison argues that habit functions as a 'threshold' concept distinct from mere disposition, explains how acquired virtues and infused virtues both allow for further growth, and shows how the loss of virtue is consistent with residual dispositional patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour that mimic virtue. Throughout, Mattison draws on his contributions to previous debates on the acquired and infused virtues (summarised in the disputed question that is the book's appendix).

Mattison distinguishes between dispositions and habits properly so-called by pushing beyond habits' phenomenological features (stability, facility and pleasurable operation) to their grounding feature, namely a 'rational specification' of the end that directs action and the way this good fits the ultimate human good (pp. 34, 66). Making this move supplies a rationale for thinking that growth in virtue is tied to an increasingly unified and coherent life, a feature of mature virtue found in Aquinas's Greek and Christian sources. It also supplies a reason for the connectivity of the virtues. Rather than limiting the rational view of relevant goods to a particular sphere, a virtue relates those goods to a particular vision of one's last end. The same goes for vice, where a false view of one's last end is no less effective at guiding action in a consistent way.

Mattison uses the 'rational specification' feature of a virtue to distinguish virtues from inarticulate 'sub-rational knacks' (Julia Annas' term), dispositional tendencies we have from inborn temperament, and from localised customary dispositions caused by socialisation. He builds on Annas' and Myles Burnyeat's work on virtue development, arguing that rational specification functions as the key to explaining how a person can grow and develop in virtue both intensively and extensively. What unifies virtuous action is the agent's cognitive and affective grasp of various goods in relation to the final human good. This grasp can be more and more deeply ingrained in the person (so virtue counts as 'second nature') and more accurately extended to new contexts and circumstances (so the mature agent reliably acts virtuously even in novel situations).

In more controversial territory, the infused virtues and gifts (chapters 6 and 7) also follow this model, unifying Aquinas' account of virtue formation. Mattison defends the need for infused virtues and explains their relationship to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine agency within the virtuous agent. Is it too much of a stretch to grant that a set of gifts beyond the infused virtues already perfecting human powers is needed to account for divine agency which prompts actions adequate to a supernatural end? Mattison makes a defensible case, even if Aquinas' account here stretches Greek definitions of virtue (and perhaps ours, too) beyond their breaking point.

The volume helpfully highlights the important role of communal socialisation, education as formation and the need for intentional social architecture in habit formation. Mattison rightly notes that these topics need to be further addressed and better integrated into philosophical and theological treatments of virtue formation. His account provides a metaphysical foundation for that work.

Mattison's 'rational specification' account follows Aquinas' distinction between natural and supernatural ends, which yields different species of virtues with different species of actions. In the process of habituation, however, how much of this matters? Phenomenologically, boundaries between dispositions and virtues, or acquired and infused virtues exercised via the gifts, might be blurrier or even inscrutable. For example, with courage, how much functional (behavioural) overlap could one expect between dispositional resilience and everyday occasions of courage, or between military or athletic accustomisation and acquired virtues aimed at the common good? When would infused virtues and gifts lead to noticeably different acts or articulations – only in life-and-death situations? Or would one's supernatural ultimate end 'saturate' daily life in ways that make it noticeably distinct from virtuous persons who have a natural ultimate end? How would answers affect the design of moral training?

Mattison's Thomistic account of growth in virtue would ideally support and guide a practical programme of virtue development. He pushes back against the common assumption that growth in virtue does not (technically) build gradually from disposition to acquired virtue to infused virtue; likewise, the agent does not relapse from infused virtue back to acquired virtue after mortal sin. Will his account help clarify distinct pathways, or cause us to under-emphasise potential overlaps in practical training or neural pathways in child-raising, educational formation and spiritual transformation? That Mattison's foundational study raises such crucial questions is a tribute to both its theoretical clarity and the practical significance of his topic.

doi:10.1017/S0036930623000509

Ligita Ryliškytė, *Why the Cross? Divine Friendship and the Power of Justice*

(Cambridge: CUP, 2023), pp. xiv + 491. \$135.00

Adam J. Johnson

Torrey Honors College, Biola University, La Mirada, CA, USA (adam.johnson@biola.edu)

Ligita Ryliškytė, in *Why the Cross*, develops an account of the atonement 'in response to the exigencies of a secular age' (p. 440), taking up a line of thought developed in