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THE NON-ARISTOTELIAN CHARACTER OF AQUINAS'S ETHICS: AQUINAS ON THE PASSIONS

Eleonore Stump

Scholars discussing Aquinas's ethics typically understand it as largely Aristotelian, though with some differences accounted for by the differences in worldview between Aristotle and Aquinas. In this paper, I argue against this view. I show that although Aquinas recognizes the Aristotelian virtues, he thinks they are not real virtues. Instead, for Aquinas, the passions—or the suitably formulated intellectual and volitional analogues to the passions—are not only the foundation of any real ethical life but also the flowering of what is best in it.

Introduction

It has become a commonplace to see Aquinas as Aristotelian in his philosophy.¹ This is particularly the case as regards his ethics. Scholars discussing Aquinas's ethics typically understand it as largely Aristotelian, though with some differences accounted for by the differences in worldview between Aristotle and Aquinas. T. I. Irwin, for example, summarizes his discussion of moral virtue in Aquinas's thought this way:

[Aquinas's] account of moral virtue emphasizes the aspect of Aristotle's account that connects virtue with correct election. Aquinas has not only Aristotle's reasons, but also some reasons of his own, for emphasizing this feature of the virtues. . . . Aquinas' claims about action and freedom agree with Aristotle's claim that correct election is the mark of moral virtue.²

Ralph McInerny highlights what he sees as the Aristotelianism of Aquinas's ethics in the *Summa theologiae* this way:

The dominant voice in these questions is that of Aristotle. . . . It is fair to say that these discussions would have been unthinkable apart from the influence of Aristotle, particularly, though by no means exclusively, of his *Nicomachean Ethics*.³

¹For a review of the disputes over the connection between Aristotle and Aquinas in the history of Thomism, see, for example, Mark Jordan, "The Alleged Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas," in *The Gilson Lectures on Thomas Aquinas*, ed. James Reilly (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 73–106.

²See, for example, T. I. Irwin's treatment of virtue in Aquinas's thought in Irwin's *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vol. 1, 544 [footnotes omitted in quotation].

³Ralph McInerny, *The Question of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 25–26.



Anthony Kenny explains Aquinas's attempt to weave the beatitudes into his discussion of what Kenny takes to be fundamentally an Aristotelian ethics by saying,

The endeavor to bring together the evangelical and the Nicomachean texts can hardly be regarded as successful. . . . What is remarkable about this rapprochement is not that it is done successfully but that it is done at all. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Christian texts are distorted to fit the Aristotelian context, rather than the other way around.⁴

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. Given this strong connection between virtue and reason, the passions are at best an ancillary to moral virtue and at worst an obstacle to it. As Irwin interprets what he takes to be Aquinas's Aristotelian view of the passions,

Passions are constituents of a virtue in so far as they are subject to reason and moved by reason.⁵

Adopting a similar view, Peter King says,

Aquinas holds *contra* Hume, that reason is and ought to be the ruler of the passions; since the passions *can* be controlled by reason they *should* be controlled by reason.⁶

For those who equate passion with emotion,⁷ it can seem as if such an Aristotelianism in ethics mandates an alienation from emotion and grounds human moral excellence in reason alone. Because they understand Aristotelianism in this way, some people are repelled by what strikes them as inhuman in such an ethics; but there are certainly others who have an opposite reaction. For some contemporary thinkers, the Aristotelian focus on reason and the apparently concomitant rejection of a significant role

⁴Anthony Kenny, "Aquinas on Aristotelian Happiness," *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 15–27.

⁵Irwin, *Development of Ethics*, 522.

⁶Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 126.

⁷There is some reason for rejecting this equation if 'passion' is taken in its most basic sense. In contemporary discussion of the emotions, an emotion is typically held to have cognitive content. For Aquinas, as I explain below, a passion taken in its strictest sense is an act of the sensitive appetite when that appetite is responding to deliverances from the senses alone. In order to have the cognitive content of the sort typically thought to be at issue in an emotion, what is needed is some deliverance from the intellect, rather than the senses. On the other hand, a passion in its extended or analogous senses, explained below, can have cognitive content; and so, depending on the account of emotion given, a passion in this extended sense might well be the same as an emotion.

for emotion is necessary for any ethics able to guide human life. So, for example, in a recent New York Times article on Catholic ethical and political stances,⁸ the influential Princeton scholar Robert George is quoted as praising an Aristotelian ethics of this sort, which he attributes to Aquinas. For George, “moral philosophy . . . is a contest between . . . Aristotle and . . . David Hume.”⁹ On George’s view, an ethics such as that of Hume, which centers ethics in the passions, can never give us an objective ethics. George thinks that we should reject the passion-centered ethics of Hume in favor of a reason-centered Aristotelian approach of the sort he thinks he finds in Aquinas. For George, the Aristotelian ethics of Aquinas is preferable to that of Hume because, on George’s view, Aquinas’s Aristotelian ethics grounds all virtue, all moral excellence, in reason. “In a well-ordered soul,” George says, “reason’s got the whip hand over emotion.”¹⁰

Whatever the truth of this view may be as regards Aristotle’s own ethics, it is certainly false, in its central claims, as regards the ethics of Aquinas; and some opposition to it has already 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.¹¹

But I would make the point more strongly. Aquinas recognizes the Aristotelian virtues, but he thinks that they are not real virtues. In fact, Aquinas goes so far as to maintain that the passions—or the suitably formulated intellectual and volitional analogues to the passions—are not only the foundation of any real ethical life but also the flowering of what is best in it.¹²

Aquinas’s Ethics Is not Aristotelian

To understand what Aquinas’s position on the passions and their role in the ethical life actually is, it helps to begin by setting aside the view that Aquinas holds an Aristotelian virtue ethics.

As Aquinas rightly sees it, each of the dispositions on Aristotle’s list—wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance—is meant to be both a virtue and an acquired characteristic. That is, a person gets an Aristotelian

⁸*The New York Times Magazine*, Dec. 20, 2009, 24–29.

⁹*Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Jean Porter, “Right Reason and the Love of God: The Parameters of Aquinas’ Moral Theology,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 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).

¹²For a thorough and persuasive argument that Aquinas’s ethics is not Aristotelian but in fact takes the second-personal as foundational for ethics, see Andrew Pinsent, “Gifts and Fruits,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also his *Joint Attention and the Second-Personal Foundation of Aquinas’s Virtue Ethics*, PhD Dissertation, St. Louis University, June 2009; and his review of Robert Miner’s *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (February 2010).

virtue or moral excellence by practicing it, by doing acts of the sort that yield the disposition of the virtue when those acts have been done often enough. Furthermore, each Aristotelian virtue is an intrinsic characteristic, a property that can be gotten and preserved by an individual acting by himself as an agent in his own right. The problem with thinking of Aquinas's ethics as Aristotelian is that none of these things true of the items on Aristotle's list of the virtues is true of the things Aquinas takes to be real virtues.

Speaking of Aquinas's virtue theory, Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields define virtue for Aquinas this way:

A virtue is a *habitus* [a disposition] that informs a reason-governed power in such a way as to perfect the activity of that power.¹³

This is perhaps an acceptable definition of an Aristotelian virtue, but it is not Aquinas's definition of what he takes to be a virtue.

Aquinas himself affirms Augustine's definition of a virtue:

A virtue is a good quality of the mind by which one lives righteously, of which no one can make bad use, and which God works in us without us.¹⁴

This is manifestly an un-Aristotelian definition, not least because it is impossible to acquire for oneself by practice a disposition that God works in a person without that person¹⁵ (though, Aquinas thinks, without in any way precluding the freedom of that person's will).¹⁶ Commenting on this definition, Aquinas says,

This definition comprises perfectly the whole formula of virtue.¹⁷

Aquinas recognizes that the Aristotelian virtues, acquired through practice of the acts correlated with a virtue, do not fit this definition because of its last clause: "which God works in us without us." He says,

acquired virtue, to which these words do not apply, is not of the same species as infused virtue.¹⁸

¹³Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 229.

¹⁴ST I-II q.55 a.4. In this paper, with a very few alterations, I am using the translation of the Fathers of the Dominican English Province, (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), because it has become standard and because there are few cases in which I think I could improve on it substantially. There are some quotations where I have altered the Dominican translation in minor ways (as in the quotation to which this footnote is appended) or even significantly; but I have left those alterations generally unmarked, thereby erring on the side of giving more credit than is due to the Dominican translation.

¹⁵For detailed discussion of the way in which, on Aquinas's views, God does so, see Chapter 13, on grace and free will, in my *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁶For a discussion of the way in which such a claim can be made consistently, see Chapter 13 in my *Aquinas*.

¹⁷ST I-II q. 55 a.4.

¹⁸ST I-II q.63 a.4 s.c.; cf. also, for example, *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi* q.un. aa.9–10 and ST I-II q.55 a.4.

And so acquired virtues are not habits that contain, as he says, the whole formula of virtue, as the infused virtues do.

Whatever benefits the Aristotelian virtues, with their source in human reason, might have for their possessor, on Aquinas's views, a person who has only the Aristotelian virtues is not yet in accord with the true moral good, whose measure is the divine law. He says,

human virtue directed to the good which is governed according to the rule of human reason can be caused by human acts. . . . But virtue which directs a person to good as governed by the divine law, and not by human reason, cannot be caused by human acts, the principle of which is reason, but is produced in us by the divine operation alone. That is why Augustine in giving the definition of such virtue inserts the words 'which God works in us without us'.¹⁹

In discussing the thesis of the unity of the virtues, Aquinas maintains that the thesis does not hold of the Aristotelian virtues but does hold of the infused virtues. Explaining this distinction, he says,

Moral virtue may be considered either in its perfect or in its imperfect state. An imperfect moral virtue, temperance for instance or fortitude, is nothing but an inclination in us to do some kind of good deed, whether such inclination be in us by nature or by habituation. If we take the moral virtues in this way, they are not connected. . . . But perfect moral virtue is a habit that inclines us to do a good deed well; and if we take moral virtues in this way, we must say that they are connected.²⁰

And a little later in the same question he says,

if a person exercises himself by good deeds in regard to one matter, but not in regard to another, for instance by behaving well in matters of anger but not in matters of concupiscence, he will indeed acquire a certain habit of restraining his anger; but this habit will lack the formula of virtue.²¹

Finally, Aquinas 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" (1 John 3:14). Now the spiritual life is perfected 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.²²

He considers the following objection to this view of his:

moral virtues can be acquired by means of human acts . . . whereas love cannot be had otherwise than by infusion. . . . Therefore it is possible to have the other virtues without love.²³

In response to this objection, he says nothing more than this:

¹⁹ST I-II q.63 a.2.

²⁰ST I-II q. 65 a.1.

²¹ST I-II q.65 a.1 ad 1.

²²ST I-II q.65 a.2 s.c.

²³ST I-II q.65 a.2 obj.2.

This argument holds good of moral virtue in the sense of acquired virtue.²⁴

From his point of view, then, the claim that the acquired virtues can be had without the infused virtue of love is no objection to his claim that NO virtues can be had without the infused virtue of love. And this conclusion can be true only if, in his view, the acquired virtues are not real virtues at all.

In fact, on Aquinas's account, it is possible to have all of the acquired virtues and still not be a moral person. A person in mortal sin is a person whose moral condition is bad enough that his soul is in peril; but, for Aquinas, a person could have all the acquired virtues and still have mortal sin. That is why he says,

Mortal sin is incompatible with divinely infused virtue. . . . But an act of sin, even mortal sin, is compatible with humanly acquired virtue.²⁵

(This conclusion is, of course, what one might have expected given Aquinas's position on the unity of the virtues thesis.)

In another question, Aquinas asks whether it is possible to have the infused virtue of love without also having the moral virtues; and, in response, he says (again, as one would expect from his position on the unity of the virtues thesis),

All the moral virtues are infused simultaneously together with love.²⁶

If this is true, Aquinas goes on to ask, why, then, do some people who have the infused virtue of love still have difficulty with some acts of moral virtue, contrary to Aristotle's claim that a person with a virtue does easily the acts correlated with that virtue? In reply, Aquinas explains that what is at issue for Aristotle is only the acquired virtues; but these are not the real virtues. For this reason, it is true that the acquired virtues are not part of what is infused when all the moral virtues are infused together with love. And Aristotle's claim about the acts associated with a virtue is not true with regard to the real (that is, the infused) moral virtues; it is true only of the acquired virtues.²⁷

There are many other places one might cite, but these are sufficient, it seems to me, to show that Aquinas's account of the virtues is not Aristotelian. Although Aquinas certainly recognizes a role for reason in the ethical life, the virtues around which his ethics is based are the virtues infused by God.

Aquinas's Three-layered Theory of Moral Dispositions

To understand Aquinas's own theory of ethics, it is important to see that he recognizes three kinds of things that can be considered moral dispositions: the Aristotelian or acquired virtues, the infused virtues, *and* the gifts of the

²⁴ST I-II q.65 a.2 ad 2.

²⁵See, for example, ST I-II q.63 a.2 ad 2.

²⁶ST I-II q.65 a.3.

²⁷ST I-II q.65 a.3 ad 2.

Holy Spirit.²⁸ The list of the things that are dispositions acquired by practice includes Aristotle's main four: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. The list of the infused virtues includes some that have the same names as the acquired virtues and some that do not, most notably the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Although there is some apparent overlap between these two lists and the list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts are radically different from both the acquired and the infused virtues, because, in Aquinas's view, the gifts are a product of an on-going relationship between a human person and the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, which somehow is within that human person. There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: *pietas*, courage, fear of the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge.

As I have been at pains to illustrate above, for Aquinas, the infused virtues are the real virtues and are necessary for the moral life. Nonetheless, on Aquinas's account, the heart of the moral life lies in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is not possible, on his view, to have one's rational faculties of intellect and will be in a good state without the indwelling Holy Spirit; and when a person does have the indwelling Holy Spirit, that person also has the gifts that the Holy Spirit brings with it. Without the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas thinks, it is not possible to be a moral person or to be in union with a perfectly good God.²⁹

Aquinas gives a relatively clear explanation of the function of the gifts. They are something like enzymes for the theological virtues, and especially the theological virtue of love, which is the *sine qua non* of the whole ethical life. An enzyme can bind with one active ingredient of a biochemical reaction and, altered in form and function by that binding, it can interact with another substrate to catalyze a reaction which would go very imperfectly without the enzyme. In the same way, for Aquinas, the gifts of the Holy Spirit have the effect of anchoring the infused theological virtues more deeply in a person's psyche and enabling them to have their desired effect there. The gifts of the Holy Spirit as-it-were cement the infused virtues into the psyche.³⁰

Nonetheless, even with so much clarification of their function, it is not immediately apparent what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are, on Aquinas's account. In this connection, it is worth noticing that, although each of the four main Aristotelian or acquired virtues has analogues among the infused virtues, each also has a correlate among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The list of the gifts includes courage and wisdom, each of which is on the Aristotelian list; and the other two on that list, justice and temperance, also have correlates among the gifts, although under different names. Turned into gifts, as Aquinas himself makes clear, temperance becomes fear of the Lord, and justice becomes *pietas*.³¹

²⁸There is another story to be told about the way in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are mediated by the sacraments, but this subject is outside the bounds of this paper.

²⁹See, for example, *ST* I-II q. 68 a.2.

³⁰See, for example, *ST* I-II q.68 a.2 ad 2.

³¹See, for example, *ST* II-II q. 19 and q.121 a.1.

To begin to see what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are and something of the way in which Aquinas's ethical theory is meant to work, take, for example, courage. On Aquinas's theory, courage can be considered as an Aristotelian virtue, as an infused virtue, or as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Courage as an Aristotelian virtue is a disposition which an agent acquires for himself and which facilitates reason's governing that agent in such a way as to make him a good citizen of an earthly community.³² Considered in this way, courage can fail to be a moral disposition; and it can be had even by those who are not moral people. Courage considered as an infused virtue is a disposition which is infused into a person by God and which makes that person suitable for the community of heaven.³³ Considered in this way, courage is a real virtue, but it is not courage in its full form. For courage in its full form, one needs courage as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Considered as a gift, however, courage is very different even from courage as an infused virtue. Taken as a gift, courage manifests itself in a disposition to act on the settled conviction that one is united to God now and will be united to God in heaven when one dies.³⁴

Considered as a gift, courage, like the rest of the gifts, stems from relationship with God, whose indwelling Holy Spirit manifests itself first in a human person's enhanced openness to God in love. By filling a person with joy in love with God, Aquinas says, the Holy Spirit protects people against two kinds of evils, which might otherwise make them give way to fear:

[it protects them] first against the evil which disturbs peace, since peace is disturbed by adversities. But with regard to adversities the Holy Spirit perfects [us] through patience, which enables [us] to bear adversities patiently. . . . Second, [it protects them] against the evil which arrests joy, namely, the wait for what is loved. To this evil, the Spirit opposes long-suffering, which is not broken by the waiting.³⁵

The gift of courage in the face of adversity is thus one result stemming from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Second-personal in Aquinas's Ethics

With this much clarification, we are in a better position to understand the nature of the gifts.

³²See, for example, *ST I-II* q.63 a.4.

³³For the general discussion, see *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi* q. un. a.9 and *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus cardinalibus*, q. un. a.2. Cf. also *ST II-II* q. 124 a.2 ad 1, and q.123 a.5, 6, and 7 and q.140 a.1.

³⁴See, for example, *ST II-II* q. 139 a.1.

³⁵Aquinas, *In Gal* 5.6. There is an English translation of this work: *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians by St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. F. R. Larcher and Richard Murphy (Albany: Magi Books, 1966). Although I have preferred to use my own translations, I found the Larcher and Murphy translation helpful, and the citations for this work are given both to the Latin and to the Larcher and Murphy translation. For this passage, see Larcher and Murphy, 180. Cf. also, *In Gal* 5.6 (Larcher and Murphy, 179) and *In Heb* 12.2.

For Aquinas, salvation from sin and the moral excellence that is part of it require the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So, for example, he says,

Of all the gifts, wisdom seems to be the highest, and fear the lowest. Now each of these is necessary for salvation. . . . Therefore the other gifts that are placed between these are also necessary for salvation.³⁶

But the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not states that are wholly intrinsic to a person, and they cannot be described adequately in either first-personal or third-personal terms. Rather, as the very name suggests, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are second-personal in character.

Recently, attention has been focused on the second-personal because of the outpouring of research on autistic spectrum disorder in children, which has an impairment in the capacities for second-personal connection at its root. This research has made philosophers as well as psychologists and neuroscientists more reflective about the fact that human beings are social animals and that they are designed for what philosophers now call 'mind-reading' or 'social cognition.' We can think of mind-reading or social cognition as a non-propositional knowledge of persons gained through second-personal experience.³⁷ Such knowledge is an achievement of the operation of a set of cognitive capacities that share many features with perception: they are direct, immediate, intuitive in character, and basically reliable. The deliverances of these cognitive capacities give one person, Jerome, an understanding of the mind of another person, Paula. In particular, these cognitive capacities enable Jerome to know in a direct and intuitive way *what* Paula is doing, to *what end* Paula is doing it, and with *what emotion or affect* she is doing it.³⁸

For Aquinas, it is open to every human person to have a second-personal connection with God; and, because of this connection, it is possible for there to be as-it-were mind-reading or social cognition between a human person and God too. A human person can know God's presence and something of God's mind in a direct and intuitive way that is in some respects like the mind-reading between human persons.³⁹ 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

³⁶ST I-II q.68 a.2 s.c.

³⁷For a discussion of the knowledge of persons, see Chapter 4 in my *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁸For a summary of some of the literature on this subject and its significance for understanding second-personal interaction, see Chapter 4 of my *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, op. cit.

³⁹For a detailed argument for this claim, see my "Eternity, Simplicity, and Presence," in *The Science of Being as Being: Metaphysical Investigations*, ed. Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011). See also my "Simplicity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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 creature.⁴⁰

On Aquinas's view, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are an outgrowth and a manifestation of a second-personal connection to God. Every gift of the Holy Spirit has its source in God's indwelling in a human person; and, in addition to its other functions, it results in a person's being attentive to God and apt to follow the inner promptings of God. Speaking of the 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.⁴¹

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.⁴²

In fact, for Aquinas, the Holy Spirit fills a person with a sense of the love of God and his nearness, so that joy is one of the principal effects of the Holy Spirit.⁴³ 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." And joy wells up from this.⁴⁴

When [Paul] says "the Lord is near," he points out the cause of joy, because a person rejoices at the nearness of his friend.⁴⁵

On Aquinas's view, a second-personal connection of love between two human persons enables them to grow in what Aquinas calls connaturality with each other. So, for example, if Paula and Jerome love each other and are united to each other, then Paula and Jerome will tend to become more like each other.⁴⁶ Their judgments and intuitions about things will become similar too. For Aquinas, a second-personal connection between a person Paula and God will have the same sort of effect. It is possible also to have connaturality with God.

If Paula has a second-personal connection with God, then Paula will grow in connaturality with God. Connected to God in this way, Paula's

⁴⁰ST I q.43 a.3.

⁴¹ST I-II q.68 a.1.

⁴²ST I-II q.68 a.2.

⁴³See, for example, *In Rom* 5.1.

⁴⁴*In Gal* 5.6; Larcher and Murphy, 179–180.

⁴⁵*In Phil* 4.1. For an English translation, see *Commentary on Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians and the Letter to the Philippians by St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. F. R. Larcher and Michael Duffy (Albany: Magi Books, 1969), 113.

⁴⁶See, in this connection, ST I-II q.27 a. 3 and q.28 a.1.

intuitions and judgments will naturally grow to be more like those of God; and her second-personal connection to God will enable her to interact in some mind-reading sort of way with God, too. On Aquinas's view, because of his commitment to the unity of the virtues thesis, which encompasses also the gifts of the Holy Spirit, this is the optimal ethical condition for a human person. In this condition, Paula will not need to try to reason things out as regards ethics. She will be disposed to think and act in morally appropriate ways because of her connection to God, not because of her reliance on reason. And her second-personal interaction with God will allow her judgments to be informed by God's judgments and God's will.

So, for example, in explaining wisdom as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (rather than as an infused or an acquired virtue),⁴⁷ Aquinas connects wisdom as a gift with the will. He says,

wisdom denotes a certain rectitude of judgment according to the eternal law. Now rectitude of judgment is twofold: first, on account of perfect use of reason, secondly, on account of a certain connaturality with the matter about which one has to judge. . . . Now sympathy or connaturality for divine things is the result of love, which unites us to God. . . . Consequently wisdom which is a gift has its cause in the will, and this cause is love.⁴⁸

The idea that the heart of ethics is second-personal has most recently been called to the attention of philosophers by Stephen Darwall,⁴⁹ though in the past it has often been associated with Levinas. But, as these brief remarks show, an emphasis on the second-personal is central to Aquinas's ethics, too. For Aquinas, however, unlike Levinas or Darwall, God is one of the relata; to be a moral person is a matter of having a right second-personal relationship to God. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are ethical excellences that are second-personal in character too. They stem from the Holy Spirit's indwelling in a human person Jerome, having a second-personal connection with Jerome, and thereby enabling Jerome to have a mind-reading connection with God. For Aquinas, true second-personal moral excellences arise when the second-personal connection between God and a human person has produced in that human person a kind of connaturality with God.

Passion: Sense Appetite and Intellect

With this much understanding of the three-layered character of Aquinas's theory of ethics, we are in a position to understand better the role of the passions in Aquinas's ethics. That is because there is also a certain three-layered character to Aquinas's account of the passions. As will be readily apparent, here, too, there is overlap among his lists.

⁴⁷The question of *ST* at issue is on wisdom as a gift. The first article asks whether wisdom should be numbered among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Aquinas, of course, answers in the affirmative.

⁴⁸*ST* II-II q.45 a.2.

⁴⁹Stephen Darwall, *The Second-person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

For Aquinas, the fundamental passion, that is, the passion that underlies the others, is love; and the principal passions, that is, the passions that are the source of the others, are joy and sadness, hope and fear.⁵⁰ But Aquinas actually has three different lists of the passions or analogues to the passions. Love and joy are on all three lists; and sadness, hope, and fear are represented on two.⁵¹

It is helpful to begin with the lowest level of Aquinas's three-layered lore of the passions, namely, with 'passion' taken in its most basic sense.⁵² Here it is helpful to review very briefly Aquinas's theory of the mechanisms of human cognition and the relation of the passions to the cognitive capacities involved.⁵³

Aquinas is part of the Aristotelian tradition that supposes there to be two different appetites in human beings, the sensory and the intellective. Each of these is a power whose outputs are desires. The sensory appetite produces desires on the basis of information coming into the mind from the senses—the smell of baking bread, the sight of fresh blood. A person can be absorbed in a book while he is smelling bread baking, without taking any notice of what he is smelling. If he feels hungry in that condition, before he recognizes that what he is smelling is bread baking, then his hungriness, his desire for bread, is a motion only of the sensory appetite and constitutes a passion. A desire for bread which is produced just by the smell of bread baking is a passion in the most basic sense of 'passion.'

So understood in its most basic sense as a motion of the sensory appetite, a passion is a response on the part of the sensory appetite to the direct and intuitive input from the senses. Nonetheless, even such a lowest-level passion is able to influence the intellect. It can make things seem good that would not have seemed good to the intellect without the influence of that passion. When it acts in this way, a passion is detrimental to the moral life. On the other hand, such a passion can also work together with the intellect subsequent to a deliverance of the intellect. In those circumstances, the passion can stimulate a person to pursue what is really good with more fervor. In cases of this kind, a passion enhances the moral life.

So if a passion is taken in this lowest level sense, it is in its own nature neither good nor bad. Its moral character is derivative from its connection

⁵⁰See, for example, *ST* I-II q.25 a.4.

⁵¹There are intellective analogues for the basic passions of sadness, fear, and hope; and hope, of course, is also on the list of the infused virtues. Depending on how one understands fear as a gift of the Holy Spirit, it may be that fear should also be reckoned as on three lists, one of which is the gifts. In this paper, I have separated the three-layered account of ethics—acquired virtues, infused virtues, and gifts of the Holy Spirit—from the three-layered lore of the passions—passions in the most basic sense, passions in their intellective analogues, and fruits of the Holy Spirit. As these brief remarks about fear show, however, there are also connections between these two sets of three lists. Nonetheless, in the interest of brevity, I am leaving these connections to one side here.

⁵²For the basic Thomistic lore of the passions, see Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵³For the basic Thomistic lore on the mechanisms of cognition, see Chapter 8 in my *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

to reason, in a way characteristic of Aristotelian ethics, as Aristotelian ethics is commonly understood.

But, for Aquinas, passion can also be understood in an extended sense. In this sense, a passion is not in the sensory appetite but rather in the intellectual appetite. The intellectual appetite produces desires on the basis of all the information coming into the mind. This appetite is what Aquinas understands as the will; and it is responsive to all the deliverances of the intellect (including those deliverances based on the intellect's connection to the senses), rather than to the deliverances of the senses alone. When a person recognizes that what he is smelling is bread and when in those circumstances, all things considered, he wants to get and eat what he recognizes as bread, the desire in question is in the intellectual appetite or will, not in the sensory appetite (or at least not in the sensory appetite alone).

A passion in the basic sense is a desire aimed at the good as the good is perceived by the senses. When the good is perceived by the intellect and stimulates the intellectual appetite or will, the resulting desire has something in common with a passion in its most basic sense, even though it lacks the tie to the senses. In the intellectual appetite, the desire is not so much a bodily feeling prompted by a perception as it is a conative attitude prompted by the mind's understanding.⁵⁴ So, for example, although in its most basic sense love is a passion in the sensitive appetite, there is a different sense of love in which love stems from deliverances of the intellect and is an expression of the intellectual appetite.

As an expression of the intellectual appetite and its interaction with the intellect, love is also a passion or, more strictly, an analogue to the passions. So understood, love—and also the other passions such as joy, hope, and the rest—are, on Aquinas's view, the formal part of passion without the material part, that is, without the part which is tied to the body, namely, the senses and the sensitive appetite.⁵⁵ Passions in this analogous or extended sense are the second layer in Aquinas's three-layered lore of the passions. Considered in this extended sense, some of the things on Aquinas's list of the passions can be had even by an impassible God. God has no passions in the basic sense of 'passion' in virtue of having no body and thus no senses. But, on Aquinas's view, God does have love and joy, for example.⁵⁶

It is important to see in this connection that two of the infused virtues have the same names as two of the primary passions: love and hope. Taken as the formal part of passion without the material part, then, love, which is the foundational passion in the sensory appetite, and hope, which is one of the principal passions, can also be dispositions in the intellectual appetite infused into a person by God. As infused virtues in the intellectual appetite, love and hope are not morally neutral. They are always good. In

⁵⁴See, for example, *ST* I-II q. 26 a.1.

⁵⁵See, for example, *ST* I q.20 a.1 ad 2.

⁵⁶See, for example, *ST* I. q.20 a.1.

fact, as I explained above, on Aquinas's account, love as an infused virtue is essential to all the real moral virtues; and, without love, no real moral virtue at all is possible. Furthermore, since Aquinas accepts the unity of the virtues thesis—not for the acquired virtues but for the infused virtues—all moral excellence, all virtue, is present at once as soon as love is infused.⁵⁷

But this is not yet the end of the story. There is still the third layer to Aquinas's lore of the passions. Just as the virtues have analogues in the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit, so the passions also have analogues in the *fruits* of the Holy Spirit. There are twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, long-suffering, goodness, benignity, meekness, fidelity, modesty, continence, and chastity. The first two items on this list, love and joy, are, of course, also on the list of the primary passions and their intellectual correlates. As 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.⁵⁸

Like the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and unlike the passions in their most basic sense, all the fruits of the Holy Spirit are second-personal in character. Aquinas explains them as the emotional condition of someone who is connected in love with God. He says this about the first three fruits of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, and peace:

[God] himself is love. Hence 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. Now love has always the actual presence of God whom it loves. So the consequence of this love is joy. And the perfection of joy is peace . . . because our desires rest altogether in [God].⁵⁹

For Aquinas, then, the contribution of the fruits of the Holy Spirit to the moral life is not a matter of the passions being governed by reason, any more than it is in the case of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are a matter of having emotions, spiritual analogues to the passions, transformed in second-personal connection to God.

This is a far cry from Robert George's view of Aquinas as basing the moral life in reason's having the whip hand over emotion.

Conclusion

So here is where things stand. 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, there are passions, in an analogous or extended

⁵⁷See *ST I-II* q. 65.

⁵⁸See, for example, *ST I-II* q.70 a.3.

⁵⁹*ST I-II* q. 70 a.3.

sense, which are infused by God into the intellectual appetite or which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit and stem from second-personal connection to God. These passions or analogues to the passions are foundational to all virtue and to the whole of the ethical life. On Aquinas's view, no moral virtue is possible without all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, and any moral virtue requires all of them.

What makes Aquinas's focus on the passions in his three-layered account different from Hume's focus on the passions in his ethical theory has entirely to do with relationship, with the second-personal. Hume recognizes that human beings are capable of a kind of mind-reading of one another. He says,

The minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each others' emotions, but also because those rays of passion, sentiments, and opinions may often be reverberated.⁶⁰

And that is why Hume says of himself,

A cheerful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity in my mind, as an angry or sullen one throws a sudden damp upon me.⁶¹

Nonetheless, for Hume, a passion is just an intrinsic characteristic of an agent, which the agent has in himself alone as the individual he is. By contrast, from Aquinas's point of view, the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit are not intrinsic characteristics but relational ones. The gifts stem from second-personal connection to God, from second-personal interaction in as-it-were mind-reading with God; and the fruits are the emotions that result from this second personal connection. What differentiates Aquinas from Hume, then, is not that Aquinas privileges reason while Hume privileges passion in the ethical life. Rather, it is that the emotions Aquinas highlights as essential to the ethical life have to do with relationship to God. Understood as the infused virtues of hope and love, or as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the flowering of second-personal connection with a personal God, passion in its analogous sense is for Aquinas the touchstone of all morality.

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⁶⁰Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 2, Pt. 2, section 5. I am indebted to Annette Baier for this reference. As she herself makes clear, Hume's philosophy emphasizes the importance of what he calls 'sympathy' for all of ethics.

⁶¹Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 2, Pt. 1, section 11. I am grateful to Annette Baier for this reference, and I am grateful to anonymous referees for *Faith and Philosophy* for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.