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# THE ACQUIRED VIRTUES ARE REAL VIRTUES: A RESPONSE TO STUMP

Brandon Dahm

In a recent paper, Eleonore Stump argues that Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues are “not real at all” because they do not contribute to true moral life, which she argues is the life joined to God by the infused virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Against this, I argue in two stages that Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues are real virtues. First, I respond to Stump’s four arguments against the reality of the acquired virtues. Second, I show four ways in which the acquired virtues contribute to the highest ethical life for Aquinas.

## *Introduction*

In a recent paper, Eleonore Stump argues that Aquinas’s account of the moral life is not Aristotelian.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, she argues that Aquinas does not think the acquired virtues contribute to the true ethical life, which she claims is the life joined to God by the infused virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Stump states her two theses succinctly:

- (1) Aquinas recognizes the Aristotelian virtues, but he thinks that they are not real virtues.
- (2) 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. (31, numbering mine)

Stump first defends (1), her negative thesis, and then constructs a picture of Aquinas’s view of the “real ethical life” in support of (2), her positive

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<sup>1</sup>Eleonore Stump, “The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas’s Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions,” *Faith and Philosophy* 28:1 (2011), 29–43.

<sup>2</sup>Stump uses the phrases “real ethical life” (31), “true moral good” (33), “moral person” (34), “ethical life” (34), “optimal ethical condition” (39) to refer to this life. It is as involved in this life that we should read Stump explaining that the acquired virtues are “not real at all” (34). There is some worry that Stump’s negative thesis is simply that the acquired virtues are not the virtues by which we attain the unqualifiedly good life. If this is her thesis, then I have no disagreement with her. But then her paper is also not controversial amongst readers of Aquinas as she claims it is. In this paper, I read her negative claims as stronger than this, as they seem to be.



thesis.<sup>3</sup> Stump is clearly correct that Aquinas is not Aristotelian insofar as his ethics is *more* than Aristotelian, but this is uncontested. It is her stronger claim, (1), to which I object. I argue, against (1), that the acquired virtues contribute positively to the ethical life for Aquinas. After briefly explaining Stump's positive account, I defend my thesis in two ways. First, I reply to each of Stump's four arguments for (1). Second, I show four ways in which the acquired virtues contribute to the moral life for Aquinas: as perfections of the human good, as practical models of how to increase infused virtues, as preparatory to the reception of grace, and as aids to the infused virtues.

Although at some points it might seem like I am merely in verbal disagreement with Stump in this paper, the truth of the matter is important for two reasons. First, the plausibility of Aquinas's ethics is affected by whether he recognizes *some* moral worth in non-Christian or Aristotelian virtues or not.<sup>4</sup> It is a severe cost of the view if it denies that non-Christian

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<sup>3</sup>Stump's constructive account is similar to the account defended by her student Fr. Andrew Pinsent. Although Stump references Pinsent's dissertation, I refer to the later book, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (New York: Routledge, 2012). In the section on Stump's arguments for her negative thesis, I reference Pinsent's similar, but usually more modest, arguments and claims. Although I do not engage her positive view, Leonard Ferry, in his recent paper, "Aristotle in Aquinas's Moral Theory: Reason, Virtue, and Emotion," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 87 (2013), 167–182, argues against Stump's account of the relation between reason, emotions, and the moral life. Ferry makes a strong case in favor of a more traditional reading. Despite Ferry's critiques and mine in this article, some of the positive account is plausible and rich. In "Friendship with the Holy Spirit," *Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics, Pentecost* (2015), 28–36, I build on the second personal part of the account of the gifts explained by Stump and Pinsent to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

<sup>4</sup>Stump's paper contributes to an ongoing debate about the nature of the acquired and infused virtues in Aquinas. Although Stump does not situate her view in relation to the discussion, I appeal to some of the relevant literature. The following is a representative but not exhaustive survey of the recent discussion, which began as a reaction to some of MacIntyre's comments about Aquinas. This is only the most recent iteration of thinkers struggling to understand the exact contours of Aquinas's view, which some of the following makes clear. In "Moral Provincialism," *Religious Studies* 30 (1994), 269–285, Bonnie Kent argues MacIntyre is committed to the view that only Christians can have true virtue for Aquinas. She discusses this further in her later book *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 19–34. Brian Shanley also argues against MacIntyre's Augustinian reading of Aquinas in "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," *The Thomist* 63 (1999), 553–577. In defense of a more Augustinian reading of Aquinas, see Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., "The Augustinianism of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory," *The Thomist* 67 (2003), 279–305. Osborne later helpfully discusses and attempts to synthesize important texts in the discussion in "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 71 (2007), 39–64. Denis J. M. Bradley addresses the issue in *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), chapter one. Angela McKay Knobel contributes the following two articles to the discussion: "Can Aquinas's Infused and Acquired Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?" *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23:4 (2010), 381–396, which helpfully surveys where some major Thomists landed in the previous iteration of this debate in the last generation; and "Aquinas and the Pagan Virtues," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51:3 (2011), 339–354. William Mattison also has a pair of articles on the topic: "Thomas's Categorizations of Virtue: Historical Background and Contemporary Significance," *The Thomist* 74 (2010), 189–234, and "Can Christians Possess the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?," *Theological Studies* 72 (2011), 558–585, in which he answers in the negative. Jennifer Herdt briefly discusses the relation of acquired and infused virtues

virtues are real virtues *in any sense*, which is what Stump seems to claim. If, as I argue, the Aristotelian virtues are real virtues that are imperfect relative to infused virtues, then the view doesn't have this steep cost. Second, this is a lemma in the grace and nature debate. Getting at the relation between the infused and acquired virtues in Aquinas aids us in understanding the relationship between grace and nature for Aquinas. The plausibility of an account of the relation between grace and nature is due not only to a general statement of the view, e.g., "Grace perfects nature and does not do violence to it" for Aquinas, but how the view gets worked out in the details, e.g., in the relation between faith and reason, how the redemption of the environment is understood, the relation between church and state, etc. Each aspect of grace affecting nature then affects the character and plausibility of the view as a whole. Thus, correcting the details provides us with a more accurate picture of the multi-faceted relation between grace and nature by which we can evaluate it.

### *Stump's Constructive Account*

In this section, I briefly explain Stump's reasons for (2) and how it relates to her negative thesis. In the next section, I argue that each of Stump's arguments for (1) fails, which opens up space for the acquired virtues to contribute to the "real ethical life."

Stump begins by explaining the three tiers of dispositions in Aquinas's ethical theory. On the first tier are the acquired or Aristotelian virtues. An acquired virtue, for example, temperance, is attained through repeated temperate acts. Aristotelian virtues order us to natural happiness. These are the virtues Stump thinks are not "real" virtues for Aquinas. The second tier has the infused virtues, which are true moral virtues. These must be given to us by God, i.e., infused, because they direct us to our supernatural end, which is beyond our natural abilities to reach. In addition to infused versions of the acquired virtues, God gives the virtues of faith, hope, and love. On the third tier are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which arise from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. The gifts act as promptings from the Holy Spirit that "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" (35). Such assistance is needed in the Christian life, and so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation, according to Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* [ST] I-II.68.2).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, Stump thinks, should be understood as second-personal traits arising from the relationship between the Christian and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Second-personal knowledge of persons is non-propositional and perception-like in that it is "direct, immediate, intuitive in character, and basically reliable" (37). Some philosophers call

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in the third chapter of her *Putting on Virtues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Taking a somewhat more practical approach is Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., "Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 29–52.

such knowledge “mind-reading” or “social cognition” because it provides us with a kind of insider understanding of another’s purposes, actions, and experience. Through charity and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have a similar second-personal connection with God. So, a Christian “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 persons” (37). Such a second-personal account is a helpful and plausible reading of what Aquinas calls “connatural knowledge” of persons, which is a kind of insight through inclination.<sup>5</sup> As an example, the gift of wisdom allows one to judge correctly about divine things through a sympathy or connaturality with them, which is contrasted with the inquiry of reason that belongs to the intellectual virtue of wisdom. Explaining why the gift of wisdom is placed in the will, Aquinas notes, “Now this sympathy or connaturality for Divine things is the result of charity, which unites us to God” (*ST* II-II.45.2).<sup>6</sup> So, through our attachment to God in charity, we are inclined to recognize the things of God intuitively.

Living according to the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the “optimal ethical condition” for a human person, but it is not the entire story (39). Stump finishes the account by explaining a three-tiered division in Aquinas’s account of the passions.<sup>7</sup> In general, passions are movements of appetite towards or away from something. Encompassed within the various passions or movements of the appetite are desires, aversions, emotions, and feelings, among other things.<sup>8</sup> On the first tier are movements of the sensitive appetite. In themselves these are neither good nor bad, but counted good or bad by their relation to reason. Sensitive appetites can be disposed to obey reason, and such dispositions are virtues. The second tier has the intellectual passions, which are movements of the intellectual appetite. The initial movement of both types of appetite is love, or movement towards the appropriate good. Finally, on the third tier are the fruits of the Holy Spirit. “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” (42). Stump explains that each of the fruits is second-personal. That is,

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<sup>5</sup>Like Stump’s second-personal reading, Jacques Maritain notes the importance of connatural knowledge in our knowledge of persons: “As I said at the beginning, knowledge through connaturality plays an immense part in human existence, especially in that knowing of the singular which comes about in everyday life and in our relationships of person to person.” “On Knowledge through Connaturality,” *Review of Metaphysics* 4:4 (1951), 473–481, at 475.

<sup>6</sup>Quotations from the *Summa Theologiae* are taken from the Dominican Fathers translation. Latin is from the *Editiones Paulinae* (1962). *Huiusmodi autem compassio sive connaturalitas ad res divinas fit per caritatem, quae quidem unit nos Deo.*

<sup>7</sup>Although both this division and the division of moral dispositions have three tiers, the divisions are not parallel as Stump explains them. The infused virtues have no special relation to the intellectual passions.

<sup>8</sup>With the recent interest in emotions has come renewed interest in Aquinas’s view of the passions. For example: Peter King, “Aquinas on the Emotions,” in *The Oxford Handbook to Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209–226; Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

they are the result of the love between a human and God.<sup>9</sup> For example, from this love flows joy at being united to God and peace because our desires rest in God (*ST* I-II.70.3). Stump concludes,

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 a second-personal connection to God. (42)

The fruits of the Holy Spirit, then, are the bloom of what is highest in the moral life.

Stump is correct that Aquinas is not Aristotelian in that his ethic is *more* than Aristotelian, which is uncontested. In this way, Stump's support for her positive thesis—that for Aquinas the highest ethical life is the Christian life of infused virtue and gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit—supports her negative thesis. Yet, this account is not enough to support her claim that the acquired virtues are not real virtues *at all*. Stump rightly thinks that the highest ethical life for Aquinas is the Christian life lived through the infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but this does not entail that for Aquinas acquired virtues have no place in such a life. In defense of her negative thesis, Stump provides the four arguments to which I now turn.

#### *Stump's Arguments*

Stump offers four main arguments that Aquinas did not think that the acquired virtues are real virtues: arguments from (i) the definition of virtue, (ii) divine law, (iii) the unity of the virtues, and (iv) charity as a necessary condition for virtue. I summarize and reply to the arguments in order.

##### *(i) Stump's Argument From the Definition of Virtue*

Stump begins by arguing that the acquired virtues are not real virtues because they do not satisfy the definition of virtue (32).<sup>10</sup> In *Summa Theologiae* I-II.55.4, Aquinas considers the adequacy of a standard definition of virtue (in his day) drawn from the writings of Augustine: "Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us."<sup>11</sup> Stump notes that Aquinas says that "this definition comprises perfectly the whole essential notion (*totam rationem*) of virtue" (32). But, she argues, the acquired virtues do not satisfy the last clause of the definition; otherwise they would be infused virtues instead of acquired. Thus, Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues are not real virtues.

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<sup>9</sup>Stump sketches such a view in the article, but it is explained at length in Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, chapters 2–4.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 12–14.

<sup>11</sup>Virtus est bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur, qua nullus male utitur, quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur.

Yet this is not what Aquinas argues in the article in question. He explains that the essential notion or formula of something is gathered from its causes. When he considers the last clause of the definition, which picks out the efficient (the moving or agent) cause, he does not conclude with Stump that acquired virtue is not real virtue. Instead, he explains that the clause must be dropped in order for the definition to apply to virtue in general:

Lastly, God is the efficient cause of infused virtue, to which this definition applies; and this is expressed in the words "which God works in us without us." *If we omit this phrase, the remainder of the definition will apply to all virtues in general, whether acquired or infused.* (ST I-II.55.4, emphasis mine)<sup>12</sup>

The final phrase, then, is dropped if we want to have a definition that applies to *all* virtue. So Aquinas does *not* think the formula excludes acquired virtue from being real virtue.

My reading is confirmed in the nearly contemporaneous *On the Virtues in General*, article two, in which Aquinas also considers the above definition of virtue.<sup>13</sup> He begins his reply by explaining, "This definition includes in it the definition of virtue; moreover, if the last clause were omitted, it would also fit the whole of human virtue."<sup>14</sup> Then, after considering everything but the God clause of the definition, he says, "All these points, moreover, apply to moral as much as to intellectual, theological or infused virtues. Augustine's additional phrase, 'which God works in us without our help,' applies only to infused virtues."<sup>15</sup>

Finally, later in the same question, Aquinas considers an argument closely related to Stump's:

Augustine says that virtue is a good quality of mind by which we live rightly, which no one can misuse, and which God works in us without our help. But if something comes about through our actions then God does not work this in us. Therefore virtue is not brought into being through our actions. (9, obj. 1)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Causa autem efficiens virtutis infusae, de qua definitio datur, Deus est. Propter quod dicitur, *quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur*. Quae quidem particula si auferatur, reliquum definitionis erit commune omnibus virtutibus, et acquisitis et infusis.

<sup>13</sup>Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., puts the disputed questions on the virtues just after the *Prima Secundae*, which was written in 1271 while in Paris. "The disputed questions *De virtutibus* must be dated from Thomas's second period of teaching in Paris, at the end of that period in 1271–1272, at the same time as the *Secunda Secundae*." *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume 1: The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005). Translations of *Disputed Questions on the Virtues* taken from Cambridge edition, trans. E. M. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). The Latin is from the Marietti edition of the *Quaestiones Disputatae, Volumen II*, Editio IX revisa (Marietti Editori Ltd., 1953).

<sup>14</sup>Dicendum, quod ista definitio complectitur definitionem virtutis, etiam si ultima particula omittatur; et convenit omni virtuti humanae.

<sup>15</sup>Haec autem omnia conveniunt tam virtuti morali quam intellectuali, quam theologicae, quam acquisitae, quam infusae. Hoc vero quod Augustinus addit *quam in nobis sine nobis Deus operatur*, convenit solum virtuti infusae.

<sup>16</sup>Dicit enim Augustinus [lib. VI *contra Iulianum*, cap. vi] quod virtus est *bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur, qua nullus male utitur, quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur*. Sed illud

Like Stump's argument, this objection works from the last clause of Augustine's definition of virtue. Because Aristotelian virtues are our doing and not God's, they are not virtues. Aquinas's reply is brief, and he simply notes that Augustine is only speaking of the infused virtues:

Augustine is speaking here of those virtues through which we are ordered to eternal blessedness. (9, *ad 1*)<sup>17</sup>

As we saw in the passage from the *ST* above, Aquinas thinks the last clause distinguishes infused virtues from the larger set of virtues. The crucial point here is that when given a chance to deny the reality of the acquired virtues, Aquinas goes the other direction. He simply explains that the Augustinian definition does not apply to all virtues. Thus, Stump's first argument fails.

(ii) *Stump's Argument From Divine Law*

Stump next argues that the value of acquired virtues cannot be "in accord with the true moral good" (33).<sup>18</sup> Stump draws from an article where Aquinas is considering whether any virtue is caused in us by habituation. In other words, he is asking whether there are acquired virtues. He begins by explaining that human virtue perfects humans in relation to their good, which must "be appraised with respect to some rule" (*ST* I-II.63.2).<sup>19</sup> Both human reason and divine law measure human virtue, the latter being wider in scope because it measures goods that are beyond reason, e.g., the beatific vision and the sacramental life, in addition to the goods that human reason appraises, e.g., political community and domestic life. These two sets of goods and rules relate to the twofold end of human beings. Although the details of the twofold end are controversial, Aquinas thought humans had both a natural end which is more like Aristotelian happiness and a supernatural end which consists in the intellectual vision of God in the next life.<sup>20</sup> The former is measured by human reason, and the latter is measured by divine law. Virtues directed to the goods measured by human reason can be acquired, while goods measured only by divine law must be infused. Stump concludes from this that acquired virtues are not "in accord with" our true moral good (33).

I want to note again that in this article Aquinas is asking the question that Stump seems to be raising: Are there acquired *virtues*? That is, can we acquire habits that perfect us in relation to our good through habituation? Aquinas's answer is clearly yes:

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quod fit ex actibus nostris, non operatur Deus in nobis. Ergo virtus non causatur ex actibus nostris.

<sup>17</sup>quod Augustinus loquitur de virtutibus secundum quod ordinantur ad aeternam beatitudinem.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 14–17.

<sup>19</sup>bonum hominis secundum aliquam regulam consideretur.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Denis J. M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999).



It follows that human virtue directed to the good which is defined according to the rule of human reason can be caused by human acts: inasmuch as such acts proceed from reason, by whose power and rule the aforesaid good is established. (*ST I-II.63.2*)<sup>21</sup>

Later Aquinas will explain that the range of goods measured by human reason includes every aspect of our nature (*ST I-II.94.2*). Aquinas is clear that acquired virtues do not perfect us in regard to our supernatural end, but he offers no indication that this excludes them from being real virtues. Thus Stump's second argument also fails to show that the acquired virtues are not real virtues at all.

(iii) *Stump's Argument From the Unity of the Virtues*

Stump then argues that the acquired virtues are not real virtues because, unlike real virtues, they are not connected.<sup>22</sup> She begins, "In discussing the unity of the virtues, Aquinas maintains that the thesis does not hold of the Aristotelian virtues, but does hold of the infused virtues" (33). The virtues are unified or connected in the relevant sense if they stand or fall together. According to the unity of the virtues thesis, then, for example, one can be courageous only if he is also prudent, just, and temperate. The virtues are deeply connected on such a view, so that acquiring one virtue requires acquiring others. Stump claims that Aquinas thinks the unity of the virtues thesis holds only for perfect virtues, and the acquired virtues are only imperfect virtues. Therefore, the acquired virtues are not real virtues.

The problem with this argument is that Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues *are* connected, which he argues in both of his major treatments of this question.<sup>23</sup> The longer treatment, *On the Cardinal Virtues*, article two, begins by making the following distinction:

We can speak about the virtues in two ways: (i) about the virtues as imperfect; (ii) about them as perfect. The *perfect* virtues are interconnected, but the *imperfect* virtues are not necessarily interconnected. (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, a. 2, emphasis in original)<sup>24</sup>

A perfect virtue, Aquinas continues, is one "that makes a person and what he does perfectly good,"<sup>25</sup> but an imperfect virtue only makes a person and what he does good "in some respect" (*ibid.*)<sup>26</sup> Perfect virtues are perfect relative to some measure. As we saw in the last section, Aquinas

<sup>21</sup>Virtus igitur hominis ordinata ad bonum quod modificatur secundum regulam rationis humanae, potest ex actibus humanis causari: in quantum huiusmodi actus procedunt a ratione, sub cuius potestate et regula tale bonum consistit.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 19–20.

<sup>23</sup>*On the Cardinal Virtues*, a. 2; *ST I-II.65.1*.

<sup>24</sup>Dicendum, quod de virtutibus *dupliciter* possumus loqui: *uno modo* de virtutibus perfectis; *alio modo* de virtutibus imperfectis. Perfectae quidem virtutes connexae sibi sunt; imperfectae autem virtutes non sunt ex necessitate connexae. (emphasis in original.)

<sup>25</sup>illa est virtus perfecta quae perfecte opus hominis bonum reddit, et ipsum bonum facit.

<sup>26</sup>sed quantum ad aliquid.

thinks human acts and virtues are measured by two rules: right reason, which corresponds “strictly to human nature,” and God (or “divine law”), which transcends human nature. In other words, some perfect virtues are acquired virtues and some are infused virtues. The twofold measure divides up the category of perfect virtue, giving us three levels of virtue:<sup>27</sup> imperfect virtue, perfect virtue relative to right reason, and perfect virtue relative to divine law.<sup>28</sup>

First, there are wholly imperfect (*omnino imperfectae*) virtues, which Aquinas does not think are connected (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, a. 2). Although someone, let’s say a judge, might have a disposition to act justly and thus make just rulings, if that person is not chaste, her justice might be compromised. For example, the judge’s lack of chastity might contaminate her justice in cases of sexual misconduct.<sup>29</sup> Thus, although the judge’s justice-like habit does dispose her to just actions, it fails to meet either measure of human action. Dispositions that are habits in this way are not connected.

The second level of virtue is those virtues that attain right reason but not God.<sup>30</sup> These are the acquired virtues. Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues are connected through prudence. It is by the virtue of prudence that we attain our end well, which is required for the cardinal moral virtues, i.e., justice, courage, and temperance. But it is the moral virtues that aim prudence in the right direction by providing the right ends to attain. Thus, the acquired virtues are connected by the interdependence of prudence and the moral virtues. Although these virtues are perfect insofar as they attain right reason, they are imperfect insofar as they do not attain God. So, when compared to wholly imperfect virtue and measured by right reason, the acquired virtues are perfect virtues that are connected. But they fail to meet the standard that transcends our nature, which is God or divine law.

The third level of virtue involves “unqualifiedly perfect virtues” (*virtutum simpliciter perfectarum*) (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, a. 2). These are the infused virtues by which we attain our supernatural end, God. The central infused virtue is charity, by which we become friends of God and live out that friendship. Aquinas argues that those who have charity also need to be given the other infused virtues and concludes that the infused virtues are connected by charity, which is their form. With all of this in the background, Aquinas concludes the article:

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<sup>27</sup>Sic igitur est *triplex* gradus virtutum (Ibid).

<sup>28</sup>In his excellent paper “Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 39–64, Thomas Osborne notes the varieties of perfect and imperfect virtues in Aquinas’s various discussions. He explains various ways of putting the seemingly orthogonal sets of distinctions together and then argues for a five-fold schema. Whatever the exact number is, the three-fold division given here is the smallest plausible reading.

<sup>29</sup>I thank Nancy Snow for the contamination metaphor and example.

<sup>30</sup>*Secundus* autem gradus virtutum est illarum quae attingunt rationem rectam, non tamen attingunt ad ipsum Deum per caritatem.

If, then, we take the virtues as unqualifiedly perfect, they are connected because of *charity*, because no virtue can be of this sort without charity, and once you possess charity you possess all the virtues. However, if we take the virtues as perfect at the second level, with reference to the human good, they are connected through *practical wisdom*, because no moral virtue can exist without practical wisdom and we cannot possess practical wisdom if any of the moral virtues are lacking. (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, a. 2, emphasis in original)<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from this article that Aquinas thinks that the acquired virtues are connected through prudence.<sup>32</sup> Thus, contra Stump, Aquinas thinks the unity of the virtues thesis holds of the Aristotelian virtues.

(iv) *Stump's Argument From the Necessity of Charity*

Last, Stump argues that the acquired virtues are not real virtues according to Aquinas because he thinks real virtues require charity. Stump appeals to *ST I-II.65.2*, in which Aquinas considers whether moral virtues can exist without charity. Building on the previous article in which he argued that the moral virtues are connected through prudence, Aquinas argues that the moral virtues can exist in us without charity although they are imperfect. In order for her argument to work, Stump must read "imperfect" as referring to the first level of virtue above—wholly imperfect virtues, which are not really virtues at all.

As we have seen, though, Aquinas also refers to the second tier of virtue as "imperfect." When considering virtues existing without charity elsewhere, Aquinas calls such virtues "true but imperfect virtues" (*vera virtus, sed imperfecta*) (*ST II-II.23.7*). Aquinas thereby identifies the second category of virtues from the previous section, i.e., virtue that is perfect relative to right reason but imperfect relative to divine law.<sup>33</sup> It is clear, then, that

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<sup>31</sup>Sic ergo, si accipiamus virtutes simpliciter perfectas, connectuntur propter caritatem; quia nulla virtus talis sine caritate haberi potest, et caritate habita omnes habentur. Si autem accipiamus virtutes perfectas in secundo gradu, respectu boni humani, sic connectuntur per prudentiam; quia sine prudentia nulla virtus moralis esse potest, nec prudentia haberi potest, si cui deficiat moralis virtus. (emphasis in original.)

<sup>32</sup>The shorter treatment in *ST I-II.65.1* begins by distinguishing between perfect and imperfect moral virtue. The latter is merely an inclination towards some kind of good deed. These are the *wholly imperfect virtues* of the *On the Cardinal Virtues* passage. Imperfect virtues like these are not connected because one can have an inclination towards courageous acts without having an inclination towards chaste acts. Perfect moral virtues, however, incline us to do a good deed well. "If we take moral virtues in this way, we must say they are connected, as nearly all are agreed in saying." (Et sic accipiendo virtutes morales, dicendum est eas connexas esse; ut fere ab omnibus ponitur.) Aquinas goes on to explain that perfect moral virtues are connected in different ways depending on how one differentiates the virtues. Thomas Osborne agrees with my reading: "Consequently it seems unlikely that [Aquinas] is here stating the infused virtues are connected whereas the acquired are not. Instead, he is pointing out that they are connected in different ways, the first through charity and the second through prudence." (Osborne, "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues," 55).

<sup>33</sup>On Osborne's division of the grades of virtue, true but imperfect virtue and perfect acquired virtue are distinct. Whether there are one or two grades of virtue in this region does not make a difference to my argument.

Aquinas considers the acquired virtues to be virtues, although imperfect in relation to our supernatural end. So, Stump's final argument fails.

An examination of Stump's arguments and Aquinas's positions shows that although Aquinas considers the acquired virtues to be imperfect relative to the infused virtues, he thinks they are real virtues that perfect their subjects.<sup>34</sup> Our question, then, is, do the acquired virtues contribute to the Christian life? In the next section, I argue that they do.

### *Moral Value of Acquired Virtues*

In this section I argue that according to Aquinas the acquired virtues contribute to the supernatural moral life in four different ways: (a) as perfections of the human good, (b) as practical models of how to increase infused virtues, (c) by disposing us to receive the infused virtues, and (d) by aiding the infused virtues in helping us resist sin and assisting in the performance of virtuous acts. I briefly consider the first three and then focus on (d), which is the primary way the acquired virtues contribute to the Christian life.

(a) As I showed in the last section, Aquinas is clear that the acquired virtues are perfections of the human good as measured by reason. The good that we are able to comprehend and achieve by our natural capacities is the standard by which these acquired habits are judged to be virtues, because they promote acting well and thereby the attainment of natural happiness. The relation between our two ends has been the subject of much debate, and this is not the place to enter into the details of those debates.<sup>35</sup> However, I think it is clear that natural happiness, although imperfect relative to supernatural happiness, is truly good. Aquinas explains that it is truly good in relation to supernatural happiness because it can be ordered to it:

Virtue is ordered to the good, as stated above (I-II, 55, 4). Now the good is chiefly an end, for things directed to the end are not said to be good except in relation to the end. Accordingly, just as the end is twofold, the last end, and the proximate end, so also, is good twofold, one, the ultimate and universal good, the other proximate and particular. The ultimate and principal good of man is the enjoyment of God, according to Psalm 72:28: "It is good for me to adhere to God," and to this good man is ordered by charity. Man's secondary and, as it were, particular good may be twofold: *one is truly good, because, considered in itself, it can be directed to the principal good, which is the last end; while the other is good apparently and not truly, because it leads us away from the final good.* (emphasis mine, II-II.23.7)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Stump offers another argument from the compossibility of acquired virtues and mortal sin (34). The reply to this objection is clear from the other replies.

<sup>35</sup>For a rigorous account of the two ends and a survey of the relevant debates, see Denis J. M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999). For a survey and discussion of the two ends and our desire for them, see Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup>Respondeo dicendum quod virtus ordinatur ad bonum, ut supra habitum est. Bonum autem principaliter est finis: nam ea quae sunt ad finem non dicuntur bona nisi in ordine

The division here is like the threefold division of virtue above. The true but imperfect virtues are those virtues that perfect us in relation to the true but particular end, natural happiness. Aquinas explains that this is truly good because it can be ordered to our universal good, which is supernatural happiness.

Therefore, the good to which the acquired virtues are ordered is a true good. It then makes sense that the acquired virtues truly help make us good, which is how Aquinas talks about them. In each case of distinguishing the acquired virtues from the infused virtues, Aquinas is clear that these virtues make their possessors good. Although these acquired goods are not good without qualification as the infused virtues are, Aquinas thinks that they are real goods. Thus, they have real moral value.

(b) The acquired virtues also act as practical models of how to increase in infused virtue. On Aquinas's account, the acquired virtues are acquired through habituation. So, for example, it is the repeated performance of temperate actions that causes the disposition towards performing further temperate actions, which is the virtue of temperance (*On the Virtues in General*, 9; ST I-II.63.2). Infused virtues similarly grow in intensity after action. But, Aquinas thinks, the infused virtues have a very different causal story. Repeated use does not increase the infused virtues in the same way because they must be increased by their cause, which is God (*On the Virtues in General*, 11). But, "Our own actions, too, can be related to the increase of charity and the infused virtues as *tendencies*, in the same way that they make us tend toward receiving charity in the first place. For we can do what is in our own power to prepare ourselves to receive charity from God" (*On the Virtues in General*, 11).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, because action that arises from infused virtues proceeds from charity, it is meritorious (*On the Virtues in General*, 11). Through this merit, God causes the infused virtue to increase. Thus, the actions of infused virtues merit their increase. Aquinas summarizes in reply to an objection, "Charity and the other infused virtues, as I have argued, are increased by actions as being dispositions and as being meritorious, rather than as being *active*" (*On the Virtues in General*, 11, *ad 14*, emphasis in original).<sup>38</sup> God is the active principle of the increase of the infused virtues, but repeated action plays an important part of the explanation.

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ad finem. Sicut ergo duplex est finis, unus ultimus et alius proximus, ita etiam est duplex bonum: unum quidem ultimum, et aliud proximum et particulare. Ultimum quidem et principale bonum hominis, est Dei fruitio, secundum illud Psalm. [Ps. 72, 28]: *Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est*: et ad hoc ordinatur homo per caritatem. Bonum autem secundarium et quasi particulare hominis potest esse duplex: unum quidem quod est vere bonum, utpote ordinabile, quantum est in se, ad principale bonum, quod est ultimus finis; aliud autem est bonum apparens et non verum, quia abducit a finali bono.

<sup>37</sup>Actus autem nostri comparantur ad augmentum caritatis et virtutum infusarum, ut disponentes, sicut ad caritatem a principio obstinendam; homo enim faciens quod in se est, praeparat se, ut a Deo recipiat caritatem.

<sup>38</sup>caritas et aliae virtutes infusae non augentur active ex actibus, sed tantum dispositive et meritorie, ut dictum est [loc. cit.].

So, although from a metaphysical perspective the causal story is different, what we do to increase in virtue has practical similarities across acquired and infused virtues (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 19). That is, if we wish to grow in virtue, whether it be an infused or acquired virtue, we should perform the actions characteristic of that virtue.<sup>39</sup> Here, then, acquired virtues contribute to the moral life by offering us a model of how to grow in virtue.

(c) Third, the acquired virtues dispose us to receive infused virtues by removing obstacles to grace. Speaking of habitual grace, which is the infused grace involved in the Christian life, Aquinas writes, “a certain preparation of grace is required for it, since a form can only be in disposed matter” (*ST I-II.112.2*).<sup>40</sup> One important element of this preparation for Aquinas can be the acquired virtues. Of course, the role of the agent in preparing himself for receiving grace is a theological minefield. To assuage Pelagian and semi-Pelagian concerns, which Stump recognizes Aquinas is operating in light of, let me make two things clear.<sup>41</sup> First, Aquinas unambiguously argues that the initial infusion of grace is unmerited (*ST I-II.114.5*). Second, although infused grace is not required as a preparation for infused grace (otherwise there would be an infinite regress), humans are not able to prepare themselves for grace “except by the gratuitous help (*auxilium gratuitum*) of God” moving us inwardly (*ST I-II.109.6*).<sup>42</sup> Aquinas does not conclude from these claims, though, that nothing we do is preparatory for grace. Instead, it is in light of these claims that we must understand Aquinas’s further claim that our actions can dispose us towards grace: “For we can do what is in our own power to prepare ourselves to receive charity from God” (*On the Virtues in General*, 11).<sup>43</sup> Without attempting to explain exactly how our actions can and cannot prepare us for grace, I argue for one way in which the acquired virtues prepare us for the infused virtues.

When considering whether there are infused virtues, Aquinas explains, “Although infused virtue is not brought about through our actions, our actions can still dispose us to it” (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 17).<sup>44</sup> How are our actions and acquired virtues able to dispose us towards grace? Aquinas explains that one way is by removing obstacles:

On the other hand, some virtues can precede faith accidentally. For an accidental cause precedes its effect accidentally. Now that which removes an obstacle is a kind of accidental cause, according to the Philosopher (*Phys. viii, 4*): and in this sense certain virtues may be said to precede faith accidentally, in

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<sup>39</sup>This is not to say that we shouldn’t do other things, like pray and receive the sacraments, which deepen our friendship with God and increase our receptivity to infused virtue.

<sup>40</sup>*Praeexigitur ad gratiam aliqua gratiae praeparatio: quia nulla forma potest esse nisi in materia disposita.*

<sup>41</sup>See chapters 12 and 13 of *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>42</sup>*Unde patet quod homo non potest se praeparare ad lumen gratiae suscipiendum, nisi per auxilium gratuitum Dei interius moventis.*

<sup>43</sup>*homo enim faciens quod in se est, praeparat se, ut a Deo recipiat caritatem.*

<sup>44</sup>*quod licet virtus infusa non causetur ex actibus, tamen actus possunt ad eam disponere.*

so far as they remove obstacles to belief. Thus fortitude removes the inordinate fear that hinders faith; humility removes pride, whereby a man refuses to submit himself to the truth of faith. The same may be said of some other virtues, although there are no true virtues, unless faith be presupposed (*non sint verae virtutes nisi praesupposita fide*), as Augustine states (*Contra Julian. iv. 3*). (*ST II-II.4.7*, emphasis mine)<sup>45</sup>

In this text, Aquinas both explains how the acquired virtues can dispose us to receive infused virtues, specifically faith, and emphasizes the imperfection of the acquired virtues. As we saw above, Aquinas thinks the acquired virtues are imperfect relative to the infused virtues, which is what he notes by explaining that there are “no true virtues,” i.e., unqualifiedly perfect virtues, “unless faith be presupposed.” Despite their imperfection, Aquinas still thinks the acquired virtues prepare us to receive infused virtues by removing obstacles to them. So, Aquinas thinks that acquired virtues have a third role in the Christian life: they dispose us towards its beginning.

(d) The fourth contribution the acquired virtues make to the real ethical life is as aids to the infused virtues. The acquired virtues help us on our way to the ultimate end. When considering whether the acquired virtues will remain in the next life, Aquinas, agreeing with Gregory, explains that these virtues “complete us for our active life, a sort of journey by which we reach the goal of contemplation in our homeland” (*On the Cardinal Virtues, 4, ad 1*).<sup>46</sup> Aquinas explains that this journey is governed by charity:

Now charity inclines us towards all sorts of virtuous activity, because it commands the activities of all the other virtues, since it is concerned with the ultimate end: for a skill or a virtue that includes a certain end, also governs whatever concerns that end, just as a military skill commands horsemanship and a horseman’s skill that of a saddler, as Aristotle says. That is why the dispositions of all the other virtues are infused into us along with charity, because God’s wisdom and goodness does what is fitting. (*On the Cardinal Virtues, 2*)<sup>47</sup>

The perfect, acquired virtues have just the sort of end, natural human happiness, that is ordainable to a higher end, supernatural human happiness

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<sup>45</sup>Sed per accidens potest aliqua virtus esse prior fide. Causa enim per accidens est per accidens prior. Removere autem prohibens pertinent ad causam per accidens: ut patet per philosophum, in VIII Physic. Et secundum hoc aliquae virtutes possunt dici per accidens priores fide, in quantum remouent impedimenta credendi: sicut fortitudo remouet inordinatum timorem impediens fidem; humilitas autem superbiam, per quam intellectus recusat se submittere veritati fidei. Et idem potest dici de aliquibus aliis virtutibus: quamvis non sint verae virtutes nisi praesupposita fide, ut patet per Augustinum, in libro *contra Iulianum*.

<sup>46</sup>quod huiusmodi virtutes perficiunt hominem in vita activa, sicut in quadam via qua pervenitur ad terminum contemplationis patriae.

<sup>47</sup>Oportet igitur quod similiter cum caritate infundantur habituales formae expedite producentes actus ad quos caritas inclinatur. Inclinatur autem caritas ad omnes actus virtutum, quia cum sit circa finem ultimum, importat omnes actus virtutum. Quaelibet enim ars vel virtus ad quam pertinet finis, imperat his quae sunt circa finem, sicut militaris equestri, et equestri frenorum factrici, ut dicitur in *I Ethicor.* [cap. i et ii] Unde secundum decentiam divinae sapientiae et bonitatis, ad caritatem simul habitus omnium virtutum infunduntur.

(ST II-II.23.7). Charity's ordering of the other virtues to a higher end is why Aquinas calls charity the "form of the virtues" (*forma virtutum*) (ST II-II.23.8). "Charity is said to be the end of other virtues, because it directs all other virtues to its own end" (ST II-II.23.8.ad 3).<sup>48</sup> Through its connection to our ultimate end, charity directs the acquired virtues by commanding their acts for its purposes and thus orders them to a higher end (ST II-II.23.8.ad 3).<sup>49</sup> Aquinas supports this point with a metaphysical argument in *On Charity*, article three:

It is clear that the act of all the other virtues is ordered to the proper end of charity, which is its object, viz., the highest good. This is certainly clear regarding the moral virtues, for virtues of this kind are concerned with certain created goods which are ordered to the uncreated good as to their final end.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the general ordainability of the acquired virtues to our ultimate end supports the thesis that the acquired virtues contribute to the Christian life.

In further support of the claim that the acquired virtues aid the infused virtues in the Christian life, I now explain a way in which the acquired virtues help the Christian avoid temptation and a way in which the acquired virtues help the Christian perform acts of charity. Although Aquinas doesn't think that the passions that incline us towards sin can be completely eradicated in this life aside from a miracle (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 14), the virtues help us overcome such passions. On the one hand,

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<sup>48</sup>caritas dicitur finis aliarum virtutum quia omnes alias virtutes ordinat ad finem suum. "Since we can merit nothing without charity, the actions of an acquired virtue cannot have merit without charity. However, the other virtues are infused in us together with charity; that is how the actions of an acquired virtue can be meritorious only by means of an infused virtue. For a virtue that is ordered towards a lower end can only bring about actions that are ordered to a higher end if this is done by means of a higher virtue." (Quod cum nullum meritum sit sine caritate, actus virtutis acquisitae, non potest esse meritorius sine caritate. Cum caritate autem simul infunduntur aliae virtutes; unde actus virtutis acquisitae non potest esse meritorius nisi mediante virtute infusa. Nam virtus ordinata in finem inferiorem non facit actus ordinatum ad finem superiorem, nisi mediante virtute superiori.) (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 4).

<sup>49</sup>Therefore, when the actions of temperateness or of courage are governed by charity, which orders them to their final end, the actions take their type, as regards form, from that; formally speaking they are actions of charity. It would not follow from this, however, that temperateness or courage themselves should take their type from that." (Non igitur temperantia et fortitudo infusae differunt specie ab acquisitis ex hoc quod imperantur a caritate earum actus; sed ex hoc quod earum actus secundum eam rationem sunt in medio constituti, prout ordinabiles ad ultimum finem qui est caritatis obiectum.) (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 10).

<sup>49</sup>Note that charity's causality as director is somewhat different than the capital vices' causality as director. Thus, Aquinas explains, "a capital vice is one from which other vices arise, chiefly by being their final cause, which origin is formal." (Et sic dicitur vitium capitale ex quo alia vitia oriuntur: et praecipue secundum originem causae finalis, quae est formalis origo, ut supra dictum est.) (ST II-II.84.3).

<sup>50</sup>Manifestum est autem quod actus omnium aliarum virtutum ordinatur ad finem proprium caritatis, quod est eius obiectum, scilicet summum bonum. Et de virtutibus quidem moralibus manifestum est: nam huiusmodi virtutes sunt circa quaedam bona creata quae ordinantur ad bonam increatum sicut ad ultimum finem.



infused virtues, as long as they remain in us, help us “refrain totally from obeying sinful desires” for mortal sin (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 14).<sup>51</sup> Acquired virtues, on the other hand, keep us from following sinful desires “to the extent that the struggle is felt less” (*On the Virtues in General*, 10, ad 14).<sup>52</sup> The process of acquiring the virtue—habituation—transforms the virtue’s subject in such a way that contrary passions are felt less. Weaker desires draw us towards sin less, and thus the acquired virtues aid the Christian in avoiding sin.

In his defense of the practical need for the infused virtues, Michael Sherwin, O.P., provides an example of this.<sup>53</sup> Sherwin is concerned with cases of adult converts who have acquired vices instead of virtues. His case study is Matt Talbot. Talbot was an alcoholic from his teenage years until his early thirties, when he became a Christian.<sup>54</sup> There was no question of the relation of acquired temperance and infused temperance for Talbot, who lived to drink.<sup>55</sup> After converting and receiving infused temperance, Talbot continued to desire not only to drink to excess but also to live his old life, where such drinking was the point. Yet, he never drank again and eventually didn’t desire to. How did Talbot remove the lingering effects of his acquired vice? Sherwin answers:

The most obvious answer seems to be that he does this by doing good actions that are contrary to his disordered inclinations. Repeated good actions, however, do more than just destroy disordered inclinations, they also develop good dispositions within us. These good dispositions are what we normally call acquired virtues.<sup>56</sup>

Once in possession of acquired temperance, avoiding drink was no longer a struggle for Talbot.

Acquired virtues also aid the Christian in performing good acts. If the Christian already has the infused virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, why does she need to use the acquired virtues to perform the virtuous action? As we just saw, the acquired virtues transform the appetites in a way that the infused virtues do not. For this reason, infused virtue “does not in the same way give pleasure straight away” (*On the*

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<sup>51</sup>Virtus enim infusa facit quod nullo modo obediatur concupiscentiis peccati; et facit hoc infallibiliter ipsa manente.

<sup>52</sup>Virtus enim acquisita praevalet quantum ad hoc quod talis impugnatione minus sentitur.

<sup>53</sup>Sherwin, “Infused Virtue.”

<sup>54</sup>Of course, explaining Talbot’s case as a case of vice should not be taken to imply that alcoholism or addiction is simply a vice. See Kent Dunnington, *Addiction and Virtue* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011) for a helpful discussion of addiction in relation to habits, and Daniel De Haan, “Thomistic Hylomorphism, Self-Determination, Neuroplasticity, and Grace: The Case of Addiction,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association: Science, Reason, and Religion* 85 (2011), 99–120 for a penetrating discussion of the many ontological layers involved in a Thomistic analysis of addiction.

<sup>55</sup>Sherwin, “Infused Virtue,” 35–37.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

*Virtues in General*, 10, ad 15).<sup>57</sup> An acquired virtue, however, “makes us do things readily and with pleasure” (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, 2, ad 2).<sup>58</sup> Adapting an example Aquinas uses elsewhere, Christians with infused virtues but not acquired virtues are like a sleepy prudent person. This person has the virtue of prudence but his tiredness hinders him from acting prudently. So, despite the Christians’ having the infusion of charity and the other infused virtues, “they can still find it difficult to exercise the virtues which they have received as dispositions, because the tendencies resulting from their earlier sinful activity remain in them” (*On the Cardinal Virtues*, 2, ad 2).<sup>59</sup> But someone who has the acquired virtues is readily disposed to perform virtuous actions. For example, we expect someone with acquired temperance to be more able to perform the actions of infused temperance, for she is used to subordinating her sensible desires to some higher good. Thus, Christians’ charity can direct such virtues to aid them in performing virtuous actions.

Therefore, the acquired virtues offer important contributions to the highest ethical life. The perfect acquired virtues direct us to human goods, and if “this particular good be a true good, for instance the welfare of the state, or the like, it will indeed be a true virtue, imperfect, however, unless it be referred to the final and perfect good” (*ST II-II.23.7*).<sup>60</sup> The imperfect virtues become part of the highest ethical life through charity and play important roles in the Christian life.

### Conclusion

Although Stump offers an intriguing account of Aquinas’s view of the moral life, the acquired or Aristotelian virtues have greater moral significance for Aquinas than she allows. Aquinas thinks that non-Christians can have morally valuable virtues that are “true but imperfect” relative to infused virtues. Moreover, Aristotelian virtues can play important roles in the Christian life. Aquinas thus offers a nuanced account that defends the superiority of infused virtues without denying the importance and value of acquired virtues. If I am correct, then Aquinas’s ethics becomes more plausible first by avoiding what Bonnie Kent calls “moral provincialism” and admitting some true virtue in those who aren’t Christians.<sup>61</sup>

The interaction between the infused and acquired virtues is also one place where grace and nature interact. When considering the relationship

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<sup>57</sup>quod quia a principio virtus infusa non semper ita tollit sensum passionum sicut virtus acquisita, propter hoc a principio non ita delectabiliter operatur.

<sup>58</sup>quod cum habitus secundum se facit prompte et delectabiliter operari.

<sup>59</sup>sed propter dispositiones ex actibus priorum peccatorum relictas patitur difficultatem in executione virtutum quas habitualiter recipit.

<sup>60</sup>Si vero illud bonum particulare sit verum bonum, puta conservatio civitatis vel aliquid huiusmodi, erit quidem vera virtus, sed imperfecta, nisi referatur ad finale et perfectum bonum.

<sup>61</sup>Bonnie Kent, *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 269–285

between sacred doctrine (grace) and philosophy (nature) Aquinas explains how he understands the relationship:

But sacred doctrine makes use even of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are put forward in this doctrine. Since therefore *grace does not destroy nature but perfects it*, natural reason should minister to faith as the natural bent of the will ministers to charity. (*ST I.1.8.ad 2*, emphasis mine)<sup>62</sup>

Philosophy, like the acquired virtues, is something good and noble, but imperfect in relation to the grace that perfects it. Similar to the relationship I explained between the acquired and infused virtues, philosophy aids sacred doctrine in a number of ways without being necessary for it. Christian philosophers must wrestle with the relationship between grace and nature. Aquinas offers a powerful general account that is, if my arguments are successful in reply to Stump, consistently and plausibly applied in the relation between the infused and acquired virtues. The reality of the acquired virtues makes Aquinas's account of both the moral life and the relationship between grace and nature more plausible. The acquired virtues, I have argued, are real goods that are elevated by charity and contribute to our supernatural life.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Utitur tamen sacra doctrina etiam ratione humana: non quidem ad probandum fidem, quia per hoc tolleretur meritum fidei; sed ad manifestandum aliqua alia quae traduntur in hac doctrina. Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat, oportet quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei; sicut et naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati.

<sup>63</sup>Thank you to Alina Beary, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Robert Kruschwitz, Christian Miller, Caryn Rempe, Robert C. Roberts, Christina Van Dyke, Ryan West, and two anonymous referees for *Faith and Philosophy* for providing helpful feedback on this paper.