

Aquinas's Ethics beyond Thomistic Virtue Ethics: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Spiritual Instinct, and Complete Human Perfection

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This paper offers a new reading and interpretation of Aquinas's doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the contemporary Thomist literature on ethics, there is far more discussion—and a far more developed discussion—of the nature and role of a virtue-*habitus* than a gift-*habitus*. Why might there be so little discussion of the gifts and their distinctive *habitus*? Is it because Aquinas devotes many more questions to the virtues than to the gifts? Is it because the majority of self-professed Thomist ethicists have not been taught the gifts, and are either unaware or have merely a notional awareness that the gifts have a principle of action distinct from and superior to that of the virtues?¹ Regardless of the reason, this paper seeks to mitigate the current paucity of analysis of the gifts and the gift-*habitus*.

This paper will discuss Aquinas's doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit from a resolutely gift-centered perspective. I do so because discussions of the gifts often presume a virtue-centered perspective. That is, treatments of the gifts typically interpret what Aquinas says about the gifts through the lens of a pre-existing virtue framework, the gifts then being made to fit into that pre-existing framework. I will argue that we see this not only in interpretations of Aquinas on the gifts, but also in English translations of the *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] on the question of the gifts.

¹ The gifts are almost never discussed in terms of their being a *habitus*, and thus the fact of their being a *habitus* seems to have little or no impact on most discussions of the gifts.

As a result, in contemporary scholarship on Aquinas's ethics, the virtues typically receive extended treatment, whereas the gifts of the Holy Spirit receive no treatment at all. And when the gifts are addressed, their treatment is brief, with the main point being that the gifts provide assistance to the virtues, like a spiritual butler. In the best-case scenario, the gifts are like Jeeves to the virtues' Bertie—undoubtedly wiser, but rarely listened to.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section compares and contrasts a gift-*habitus* and a virtue-*habitus*. The second section focuses on Aquinas's notion of *instinctus*. The instinct of the Holy Spirit (divine instinct) is the principle of motion Aquinas associates with the gifts of the Holy Spirit (*ST*I-II, q. 68, aa. 1–2). I argue that—contrary to the judgment of most commentators—*instinctus* is a highly appropriate term to describe the character of the work of the Holy Spirit. In this section I also show how Aquinas's doctrine of *instinctus* has been made “invisible” in part by various translations of the *ST*, including the translation of Fr. Shapcote.²

In the third section, I analyze Aquinas' argument that the gifts are more perfective of human beings than the virtues (*ST*I-II, q. 68, a. 8). This analysis also constitutes a “case study” of the ways in which Shapcote's translation (the dominant English translation for the last hundred years) contributes to misunderstandings of Aquinas's views on the relationship between the gifts and the virtues. In comparing and contrasting the virtues and gifts, an *original part of my argument is my claim that, while charity sometimes operates from a virtue-habitus, at other times it operates according to a gift-habitus*. Commentators have failed to adequately account for the fact that truly perfect (*simpliciter*) charity cannot be attained solely by the operations of virtue. The ultimate expression of charity requires a *habitus* superior to a virtue-*habitus*.³ While the wayfarer's expression of charity is always in one

² When I refer to the English translation of the *ST*, I am referring to the translation of Fr. Laurence Shapcote, O.P. (1864–1947). Because Fr. Shapcote wished to remain anonymous, the translation has been attributed to the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Fr. Shapcote is identified as the translator in Fergus Kerr, “Comment: The Shapcote Translation,” *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1041 (2011): 519–20. Fr. Shapcote's translation was remarkably speedy, completing all but questions 80–189 of the *secunda secundae* between 1911 and 1917. Sent as a missionary to South Africa between 1920 and 1922, Fr. Shapcote completed the *secunda secundae*, the *supplementum*, and appendices. By 1923 he was translating the *Summa contra gentiles*. Fr. Shapcote's translation is the one freely available online and continues to be reproduced, including in the Latin–English Aquinas *Opera Omnia* project run by the Aquinas Institute at Wyoming Catholic College.

³ My use of “ultimate” is deliberate. I have in mind the level of perfection described by Servais Pinckaers as the third and final stage of moral and spiritual perfection (*Sources*

sense a gift from God, in that it relies on God's grace, as the wayfarer grows in charity, charity increasingly functions as a gift of the Holy Spirit, or perhaps the form of all the gifts.⁴

The fourth and final section focuses on how the gifts and infused virtues operate in the wayfarer who is growing in spiritual maturity. I argue that, although infused virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus* are given at baptism, facility in either typically grows slowly. Increasing facility in infused virtue-*habitus* will typically precede increased facility in a corresponding gift-*habitus*. *A second original part of my argument is my claim that the wayfarer does not act from an infused virtue-habitus and a gift-habitus simultaneously, but serially.* I claim this because, according to Aquinas, a person cannot act according to these two different principles of motion simultaneously. In this final section, I also analyze the source of judgment in a virtue-*habitus* versus a gift-*habitus*; reiterate the distinction between the gift as a *habitus* which is necessary for salvation, on the one hand, and the increasing facility in acting according to a gift-*habitus* which perfects the wayfarer, on the other; and finally, in light of my claim that the wayfarer acts from a virtue-*habitus* or a gift-*habitus* serially, I discuss when it is appropriate to describe an act as arising from a virtue, and when to describe an act as arising from a gift.

The title of the essay calls for a moral theology *beyond* a Thomistic virtue ethic. But what does "beyond" mean? It does not mean denigrating the significance of the virtues. The acquired and infused virtues are clearly central for a Thomistic ethic. Furthermore, the pursuit of perfection through acts of faith, hope, and especially charity, as well as acts of infused prudence, justice, courage, and temperance, remains in place. So what is different

of Christian Ethics [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995], 359–71 [originally in French in 1985]). In the first and second stages of moral and spiritual growth, the wayfarer is guided predominantly by virtue-*habitus*. However, by the time the wayfarer reaches Pinckaers's third and final stage of moral and spiritual development, she will act predominantly according to gift-*habitus*. At that stage the wayfarer is focused on receptivity to the Holy Spirit through her spiritual instinct as she pursues *ultimate* perfection, the most perfect, holy, and flourishing human life.

⁴ While making the argument is beyond the scope of this paper, I take it that Aquinas's theology of the gifts underwent an evolution beginning around the time he wrote the *prima secundae* (1271), continuing through the time he wrote the *secunda secundae* (1271–1272), his disputed questions on charity (1272), his *Contra retrahentes* (1272), and his commentaries on Romans and 1 Corinthians (1273). On the evolution of Aquinas's thought on the gifts, see Jean-Pierre Torrell (in *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, and vol. 2, *Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996 and 2003], 1:146–47) and Edward O'Connor (in "Appendix 4: The Evolution of St. Thomas's Thought on the Gifts," in *Summa theologiae* [ST], vol. 24 [London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1973]).

about the approach being advocated? How is the call for greater emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the wayfarer significant? My claim is that, as Christians are drawn into the life of God and towards greater perfection, the role of discursive reason, and thus virtue, decreases in importance and is superseded by the receptivity of the entire human person to spiritual instinct. This is not a repudiation of *intellectus*, but an acknowledgement that, as we increasingly participate in the life of God, *intellectus* is increasingly displayed in what he calls “affective knowledge,” or “knowledge by connaturality,” which is an outworking of the wayfarer’s receptivity to the instinct of the Holy Spirit.⁵ But, as the wayfarer comes ever closer to God, the faithful disciple increasingly is moved by a principle of motion greater than a virtue-*habitus*, and in this way moves beyond what is possible according to a life of virtue—acquired or infused.

Virtue-*Habitus* and Gift-*Habitus*

For the wayfarer to be adequately guided to *beatitudo* by the Holy Spirit, wayfarers must act according to two different *habitus*.⁶ “A habit is a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill.”⁷ For Aquinas, a *habitus* is a quality. When we gain or lose a quality (e.g., the virtue of courage or the gift of wisdom), real changes go on in us.⁸

⁵ On affective knowledge in Aquinas, see Victor White, “Thomism and Affective Knowledge,” *Blackfriars* 24, no. 274 (January 1943): 8–16. Parts II and III of this essay appear in *Blackfriars* 24, no. 277 (April 1943): 126–31, and *Blackfriars* 25, no. 294 (September 1944): 321–28.

⁶ I will not translate *habitus* as “habit” in this paper, instead retaining the Latin. In English “habit” connotes a kind of unthinking and automatic response to a stimulus and excludes intellect or will. On the other hand, as Nicholas Austin, S.J., aptly puts it, comparing “habit” and *habitus*, “a virtue is a *habitus*, not because it generates automatic reactions but because it is a stable quality that perfects our capacity for rational agency and disposes us to deliberate, intentional human action” (*Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017], 32–34).

⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 49, a. 1: “Quod habitus dicitur dispositio secundum quam bene vel male disponitur dispositum.” This definition is repeated in each of the other three articles of question 49, with the definition developing and expanding as Aquinas develops his argument. Unless otherwise noted, as in the case of Shapcote, translations are my own.

⁸ Aquinas also notes that *habitus* are “accidental” qualities in us in the sense that we can that we can gain or lose them, and that the gain or loss of such qualities changes who we are.

Virtue-Habitus

One of the two genera of *habitus* is virtue-*habitus*. With regard to human beings, a virtue-*habitus* is an operative habit; that is, it applies to actions.⁹ The defining characteristic (formal cause) of an act that flows from a virtue-*habitus* is that the act is “according to reason [*rationem*]” (*ST* I-II, q. 54, a. 3, resp.). That the act or *habitus* is “according to reason” is also its “measure” or “mode.”¹⁰ While Aquinas speaks of different kinds of virtues—intellectual, moral, theological, infused moral, and so on—the defining characteristic of any and all virtuous actions is that they are done according to the mode of reason.

For Aquinas there are two species of virtue-*habitus*: acquired virtue-*habitus* and infused virtue-*habitus*. They are different species because they are defined differently, the definition of infused virtues including “God’s working in us.” However, while they are different species of the virtue-*habitus*, acquired virtue and infused virtue are in the same genus. They are both virtue-*habitus*, because both operate according to reason (*ST* I-II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 4). When Aquinas defines virtue as “a good quality of the mind by which we live righteously” (q. 55, a. 4), he then elaborates on his definition in three ways: first, by “good” he is referring to “the good fixed by reason” (ad 2); second, “reason, or the mind, is the proper subject of human virtue” (ad 3); and third, righteous living includes acts ordered both to “due ends” (i.e., for the acquired virtues) and to “divine law” (i.e., for the infused virtues) (ad 4).¹¹

Gift-Habitus

The second genera of *habitus* is gift-*habitus*.¹² In his discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas is abundantly clear that, like the virtues, the seven

⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 55, a. 2: “Human virtue refers . . . to acts. Consequently, it is essential to human virtue that it be an operative habit.”

¹⁰ Note that the specific description of the mode will differ depending on the specific virtue being discussed.

¹¹ That by “due ends” and “divine law” Aquinas is including both acquired and infused virtues is evident by how he distinguishes acquired from infused virtues. Whereas the mean for acquired virtue is the rule of (unaided) human reason (*regulam rationis humanae*), the mean for infused virtues is the rule of divine law (*regulam legis divinae*) (*ST* I-II, q. 63, a. 4).

¹² For Pinckaers’s description of the three stages of moral and spiritual growth, from an emphasis on obedience to commands, to an emphasis on infused virtues, to an emphasis on gifts, see *Sources of Christian Ethics*, 359–71. Pinckaers’s point is that the wayfarer’s pilgrimage towards perfection (i.e., fulfilment) begins with obeying the commandments, and then develops primarily through practices of faith, charity, justice, courage, and the other virtues, albeit with some exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

gifts of the Holy Spirit—understanding, counsel, wisdom, and so on—are also *habitus*, that these gifts are interior dispositions in our souls. Like a virtue-*habitus*, a gift-*habitus* is an operative habit, leading to human actions.

When Aquinas introduces his thesis about the distinction between virtues and gifts in article 1 of question 68 of *ST* I-II, to be sure that his reader takes in the point, he repeats his thesis three times. While both are infused by God (*infunduntur a Deo*), it is by the gifts that a human being “is disposed to be readily moved by divine inspiration” (resp.), “rightly follows God’s instinct” (ad 3), and “is operated by divine instinct” (ad 4).¹³

Aquinas’s argument for the gifts being *habitus* is based on the authority of Jesus’s promise that the Holy Spirit will abide in believers. Thus the Holy Spirit, in the form of his gifts, must be in human beings as an abiding (*permanentes*) *habitus*, rather than abiding with the believer only occasionally (I-II, q. 68, a. 3). Aquinas draws a clear parallel between the capacities of a virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus*.

The moral virtues are habits whereby the appetitive power is disposed to obey reason promptly; . . . the Holy Spirit’s gifts are habits whereby the human being is perfected by readily obeying the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Here, Aquinas states two ways in which a gift-*habitus* is superior to a virtue-*habitus*. First, whereas a virtue-*habitus* guides one particular human power, a gift-*habitus* guides the whole human being. Secondly, whereas a virtue-*habitus* disposes a person to obey reason (which is imperfect), a gift-*habitus* disposes a person to obey an instinct in them which is of the Holy Spirit (which is perfect).

Noting the superiority of a gift-*habitus* to a virtue-*habitus* is something Aquinas does repeatedly in *ST* I-II, q. 68. When one has the gifts of the

However, the journey, if sustained, takes the wayfarer to a stage where she focuses less on acting virtuously, and more on receptivity to the Holy Spirit’s guidance through what Aquinas calls “spiritual instinct.” If the wayfarer grows to this level of moral and spiritual perfection, receptivity to spiritual instinct makes possible an unrivalled degree of earthly union with God.

¹³ Translating *instinctu divino* as “divine instinct” creates an ambiguity not present in the Latin. For, “divine” can be understood as a noun or an adjective. In the Latin it is an adjective, so Aquinas means something akin to “divinized instinct” or “divinely-implanted instinct.”

¹⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 3, resp.: “Vires appetitivae disponuntur ad prompte obediendum rationi. Unde et dona spiritus sancti sunt quidam habitus, quibus homo perficitur ad prompte obediendum spiritui sancto.”

Holy Spirit, the moving principle in the person is (a spiritual) instinct rather than reason.

For those who are moved by divine instinct [*instinctum divinum*], it is not expedient to consult human reason, but to follow their interior instinct [*interiorem instinctum*], since they are moved by a better principle [*meliori principio*] than human reason; . . . the gifts perfect human beings for acts higher [*ad altiores actus*] than acts of virtue. (a. 1)

Aquinas is consistent with regard to the basic reason that a gift-*habitus* is inherently superior to a virtue-*habitus*. “The more exalted the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition.”¹⁵ He then adds that to receive still more effective guidance than that which is provided by virtues, “higher perfections must be present within a human being, according to which he is disposed toward this—that he be divinely moved” (“dispositus ad hoc quod divinitus moveatur”).

Aquinas on the Manner of the Work of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as Instinct

Why Thomists Should Not be Afraid of Instinct

A generation ago, Servais Pinckaers encouraged us not to be afraid of *instinctus* as used by St. Thomas. His plea has not been heeded. Instead, Thomists continue to urge us against the use of it. For example, Andrew Pinsent says that “the connotations evoked by the modern word ‘instinct’ are unhelpful, given the association of the word with the behavior of animals rather than the union of persons.”¹⁶ In contrast, I want to argue that the fact that “instinct” is associated with the actions of non-human animals is one reason why it *is* appropriate to use it when trying to understand Aquinas. In addition, if we attend to our actual everyday use, we find that our use of

¹⁵ ST I-II, q. 68, a. 1, resp.: “Quanto igitur movens est altior, tanto necesse est quod mobile perfectiori dispositioni ei proportionetur.”

¹⁶ Pinsent further notes that the term lacks a personalist dimension, failing to connote “interpersonal union” (*The Second Person Perspective in Aquinas' Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* [London: Routledge, 2013], 32–33, 125n27). Contrary to this claim that “instinct” lacks a personalist dimension, I shall argue below that “instinct,” both for Thomas and in contemporary English usage, is a mode of knowing ordered towards both individual and interpersonal goods.

“instinct” captures important but often overlooked aspects of appropriate relationships between human persons and both God and neighbor.

The aversion of many Thomists to the language of “instinct” reveals a continuing intellectual captivity to a discredited Cartesian trope, namely that non-human animals act mechanistically, “instinct” denoting their “hard-wired” biology. Their captivity to this behavioristic picture of “instinct” unfortunately perpetuates an intellectual blunder associated with mid-twentieth-century psychology, evolutionary theory, and sociobiology.¹⁷ Today, no serious primatologist or ethologist (or for that matter animal trainer or pet owner) thinks of higher animal species in this behavioristic way. And neither did Aquinas. So why are some contemporary Thomists still waving Pavlovian and Skinnerian flags?

More importantly for the purposes of the argument of this essay, behavioristic assumptions about “instinct” run counter to the diversity inherent in our actual everyday use of “instinct.” For instance, we use “instinct” to refer to a particular skill that a person possesses, such as “when trying to finish off his tennis match, his killer instinct kicks in,” or “her diving save was pure instinct.” We also use the term when referring to a tacit or intuitive understanding in a particular situation: “his instincts told him not to go near that old shed”; “despite his seeming to be truthful and honest, her every instinct told her not to trust him.” We also use it of someone’s acting to protect herself or another person: “he sustained only a broken wrist because, as he fell, he instinctively put out his hands to break his fall”; “she instinctively ran to grab the child, ignoring the great danger involved”; “he instinctively jumped on the grenade to shield the rest of his platoon.” We also use “instinct” for a natural or intuitive ways of thinking: “I didn’t have as strong a mothering instinct as some other mothers.”

As we see from these examples, “instinct” is used to refer to many different human capacities. It may be a particular talent or gift, ability, capacity, facility, aptitude, skill, flair, feel for, genius in, knack, bent, and so forth. It also can refer to a particular drive or urge, but this is not the dominant contemporary usage. In general, “instinct” refers to the way that human and non-human animals act or react without employing discursive reasoning or

¹⁷ According to Anthony Kenny, behaviorism as a psychological theory arose with John Watson’s work, dating to 1929, and was still popular in the 1950s, but was already undergoing devastating philosophical critique by the early 1960s (see ch. 2 in his *Action, Emotion, and Will* [London: RKP, 1963]). Charles Taylor, whose *The Explanation of Behaviour* [London: RKP, 1964] launched a full-scale critique of behaviorism, notes that “instinct” traditionally means a “basic purpose” (221).

its analogue. Most typically, a person's instinct presumes some kind of skill, although it is often tacit in that one has a sense of what is going on.

What is crucial to recognize is that we almost always use "instinct" to refer to actions that are oriented to some good for a human person or a non-human animal. An instinctual action typically protects, preserves, or otherwise furthers a person's good. Thus, contra the behavioristic misunderstandings of some, "instinct" is a teleological term: it is ordered towards the good of the individual and/or to the common good.

The significance of the above account of our actual everyday *usage* of "instinct" (as opposed to the behavioristic bogeyman) is that it is akin to how Aquinas uses *instinctus*. Aquinas does not typically use *instinctus* to refer to something innate or fixed.¹⁸ As with contemporary usage, Aquinas uses *instinctus* in varied ways. For Aquinas, *instinctus* is "a combination of external and internal cognitions of appetites and local movements of all kinds."¹⁹

For example, natural instinct is the source of the desire for beatitude or flourishing. Since the end for humans (and other animals) is instinctual or given, Aquinas says that human free choice is about means rather than ends.²⁰ Similarly, it is by natural instinct that we know the first principles of theoretical reason and practical reason—the principles of non-contradiction and the desire for good and aversion to evils.²¹ One of the key powers involved in natural instinct is that of perception, which among other things is the cogitative power to size up a situation, to come to a good judgment of a particular situation. This is what Aquinas calls instinctive judgment.

In his work on Christian perfection, Aquinas notes that natural instinct is the starting point for love of self, neighbor, and the common good.

¹⁸ See John Deely, "Animal Intelligence and Concept-Formation," *The Thomist* 35, no. 1 (1971): 43–93.

¹⁹ See Julien Peghaire, "A Forgotten Sense, the Cogitative, according to St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Modern Schoolman* 20 (1943), 210–29, at 228, cited in Nicholas Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 23n14.

²⁰ "Although our intellect moves itself to some things, yet others are supplied by nature, as are first principles, which it cannot doubt, and the last end, which it cannot but will" (*ST* I q. 18 a. 3).

²¹ Aquinas calls this aspect of natural instinct "understanding," which is a part of practical reason, though not the notion of understanding that is an intellectual virtue. In discussing the kind of understanding that is a natural instinct and that is a part of the virtue of practical reason, Aquinas says "understanding denotes here, not the intellectual power, but the right estimate about some final principle, which is taken as self-evident: thus we are said to understand the first principles of demonstrations" (*ST* II-II, q. 49, a. 2). Furthermore, he also distinguishes this sense of understanding from that which refers to one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (ad 2).

Proceeding in an orderly fashion, Aquinas notes that since we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, we must first understand rightly ordered love (*dilectio*) of self. He begins by noting the way humans order the most basic natural goods (i.e., one's life, limbs, and livelihood).

Love prefers the greater to the lesser good. Now it is clear that of all human good the welfare of the soul is the greatest; next in degree comes physical well-being; and external goods occupy the last place. It is natural to man to observe this order in his preference. For who would not rather lose bodily eyesight than the use of reason? Who would not part with all his property in order to save his life?

This order of goods is natural in that very few people in practice fail to observe it.

Properly ordered love of neighbor follows similarly—one gives first priority to the neighbor's life, then to the neighbor's bodily integrity, and then to the neighbor's possessions.

We are commanded to observe the same order in the love of our neighbor that we ought to observe in the love of ourselves. Hence we must desire his welfare in the same manner as we ought to desire our own, i.e., first his spiritual good, then his physical prosperity, and then such goods as consist in extrinsic possessions. But if we wish our neighbor to have material goods harmful to his health of body, or physical welfare opposed to his spiritual profit, we do not truly love him.

Finally, Aquinas speaks of the ordering of love to the communion of all.

According to right reason the common good is to be preferred to the individual good. Each part is by natural instinct [*naturali instinctu*] ordered to the good of the whole. . . . In the communion in which all persons are united in their end of beatitude, each individual must be considered as a part, and God, in whom the beatitude of all consists, must be regarded as the common good of the whole. Hence according to right reason and natural instinct [*naturae instinctum*], each man orders himself towards God as a part is ordered to the whole.²²

²² Aquinas, *De perfectione vitae spiritualis*, ch. 14.

The Meaning of *Instinctus*²³

A proper understanding of *instinctus* is crucial to the argument of the paper for three reasons. First, *instinctus* is the principle of motion by which the Holy Spirit works in us through the gifts. Second, this manner of the Holy Spirit's working is unique to the gifts. It is to be contrasted with discursive reason, which is the manner through which the Holy Spirit works with regard to the theological or other infused virtues. Third, *instinctus* is a term Aquinas uses increasingly in his mature work, and his particular use of it is unique among Scholastic theologians of his time.²⁴ The facts that Aquinas departs from tradition and authority in his use of *instinctus* and that his use of it becomes most significant in his most mature work attest to its importance for Aquinas's mature understanding of the significance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the wayfarer.

When describing the nature of the Holy Spirit's motion, Aquinas variously employs three related terms: inspiration, instigation, and instinct.²⁵ When describing the Holy Spirit's motion through the gifts in particular, his choice is "instinct."

When Aquinas begins his discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in *ST* I-II, q. 68, he initially says that the gifts dispose the wayfarer "to be ready to be moved by divine inspiration."²⁶ Divine inspiration is movement from outside, or exterior to, the wayfarer (q. 1). However, immediately after introducing the notion of inspiration in his *respondeo* in article 1, Aquinas changes his terminology. Abandoning the language of "inspiration" with its connotation of exterior movement, Aquinas speaks instead of the *instinctus* of the Holy Spirit. Aquinas transitions from speaking of the Holy Spirit's principle of motion as exterior inspiration (*motionem ab exteriori*) to speaking of the Holy Spirit's principle of motion as an interior instinct (*interiorem instinctum*).²⁷ While instinct is considered a principle of motion, it is more

²³ In this version of the paper, I do not compare "instinct" to "instigation." One way Aquinas seems to distinguish the two is that, while instinct is something that moves the individual who has it, instigation is what one does to another. So in Aquinas's discussion of guardian angels, he says that, while a human has a natural instinct to the good, the instigation of guardian angels invisibly enlighten humans that they may do good (*ST* I, q. 113, a. 1, ad 3).

²⁴ See O'Connor, "Appendix 4," 108n30, 130.

²⁵ In the *ST*, "instinct" appears more often than "inspiration" and "instigation" combined.

²⁶ Interestingly, "inspiration" appears surprisingly infrequently in the *ST*, its first substantive appearance occurring at the beginning of that discussion of the gifts.

²⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 2. In the *prima secundae*, Aquinas contrasts the *habitus* (i.e., virtues and vices and gifts), which are discussed in qq. 49–89, to law and grace, which are discussed in qq. 90–114. Whereas Aquinas says that *habitus* are intrinsic principles

precisely a *principle of receptivity within us to being moved* by the Holy Spirit. From this point on in the *ST*, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are always referred to as enkindling “an interior instinct,” which is how a gift-*habitus* leads to actions of a particular kind.

Unlike “inspiration,” which almost always refers to the divine, *instinctus* is used in many contexts in the *ST* and in Aquinas’s later Scripture commentaries. Besides the divine instinct, rational instinct, the instinct of the Holy Spirit, and a special instinct of God, Aquinas speaks of a natural instinct to the good,²⁸ animal instinct, demonic instinct, prophetic instinct,²⁹ instinct of the mind,³⁰ instinct of grace,³¹ and instinct of lust.³² In all these cases, it is an interior principle of movement that leads a human being or a non-human animal to act in a particular way. Occasionally Aquinas likens an interior instinct to a natural inclination, but an interior instinct, as an existing *habitus* to act in a certain way, is for him far more determinative of one’s action than a mere inclination to an action.³³ With non-human animals, the animal will act according to natural instinct unless prevented by circumstances.³⁴ With human beings, to act according to natural instinct is to act according to the *habitus* of our nature.³⁵

How Instinctus Becomes Invisible

In the introduction, I claimed that the standard English translation of the *ST* has obfuscated Aquinas’s doctrine of instinct.³⁶ This claim requires

of human action (q. 49, pref.), law and grace are exterior principles of action (q. 90, pref.; q. 109 pref.)

²⁸ *ST* I, q. 113, a. 1, ad 3: “Men depart from the natural instinct of good on account of a passion ensnared by sin [homines a naturali instinctu boni discedunt propter passionem peccati].”

²⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 173, a. 4: “When a man knows that he is being moved by the Holy Spirit, . . . this belongs properly to prophecy; whereas when he is moved, without his knowing it, this is not perfect prophecy, but a prophetic instinct [*quidam instinctus propheticus*].”

³⁰ Aquinas, *Super Rom* 8, lec. 6, Marietti no. 707, commenting on 8:30, that those whom God predestined he also called. Aquinas says that God’s call may be “interior and is nothing other than an instinct of the mind whereby a man’s heart is moved by God to assent to the things of faith or of virtue.”

³¹ *ST* I-II, q. 108, a. 1; III, a. 69, a. 5.

³² *ST* II-II, q. 154, a. 8: “Adultery is sexual intercourse . . . in contravention of the marriage compact, whether through one’s instinct of lust, or by mutual consent [*propriae libidinis instinctu vel alienae consensu*].”

³³ See e.g., *ST* III, q. 60, a. 5; *Super Gal* 2, lec. 2, Marietti no. 94.

³⁴ By “circumstances,” I am including situations where the normal function of the instinct is inhibited or prevented.

³⁵ For Aquinas’s discussion of bodily *habitus*, see *ST* I-II, q. 50, a. 1.

³⁶ For more on Fr. Shapcote, see footnote 2. My criticism of Fr. Shapcote’s translation of

explication and defense. My claim is that Shapcote's translation of the question on the gifts of the Holy Spirit appears to contribute to a widespread misunderstanding of the significance of *instinctus* for Aquinas's account of the gifts. Shapcote obfuscates "instinct" by refusing to translate *instinctus* as "instinct" when the subject is "spiritual instinct," even though he almost always otherwise does so when translating other forms of *instinctus*.

For example, on the thirty or so occasions that *naturalem instinctum* appears prior to the discussion of the "the instinct of the Holy Spirit," *naturalem instinctum* is translated as "natural instinct" in every instance.³⁷ Shapcote readily renders *instinctus* as "instinct" when it comes to natural instinct—especially that of non-human animals. But as noted above, he resists doing so when the subject is the instinct of the Holy Spirit.

Even with regard to spiritual matters, Shapcote's aversion to *instinctus* appears. He has no objection to translating *inspiratio* as "inspiration." In the first article of *ST* I-II, q. 68 (the question on the gifts of the Holy Spirit), Aquinas uses *inspiratio* or *inspiratione divina* four times, all of which are rendered as "inspiration" or "divine inspiration." However, in the rest of question 68 (i.e., the rest of that article and the next seven articles), Aquinas uses *instinctum*, *instinctus*, or *instinctu* sixteen times. Of those sixteen uses, only three are translated as "instinct." There appears to be no rhyme or reason to the choices. *Instinctum divinum* is usually translated as "the divine promptings," but occasionally as the "divine instinct." Phrases like *instinctus Spiritus Sancti*, *instinctus rationis*, and *a Deo per specialem instinctum* always become, respectively, "the prompting of the Holy Spirit," "the prompting of reason," and "the special promptings of God." But to translate *instinctus* as "promptings" or "impulse" defies both the demands of accuracy and Latin grammar. It is clear that *instinctus* is a stable, interior principle of motion, which neither "promptings" nor "impulse" connote. Furthermore, how can one translate *instinctus* as "promptings" when *instinctus* is singular? Or as "impulse," with its connotations of irrationality? *Instinctus divinis* surely cannot imply that!

What makes these mistranslations of *instinctus* initially puzzling is that Aquinas uses *instinctus* extensively and in many contexts in the *ST*. With so many contexts to consult, one would expect that a translation would be

ST I-II, q. 68, a. 8, should in no way be understood as diminishing his monumental accomplishment in translating Aquinas into English. In many ways, the problem is not with Shapcote, but with the widespread view that Shapcote's is a completely "literal" translation. However, to make the best sense he could of what Aquinas was saying, Shapcote had to make many judgments, and these judgments did not always lead, as we shall see, to a literal translation.

³⁷ When the topic is non-human animals, "instinct" appears in the English even when it is not in the Latin!

relatively straightforward. Furthermore, it would seem that the influence of this translation is not limited to those unfamiliar with the Latin. Scholars still overwhelmingly reproduce Shapcote's translation, even with the problems I have noted. To be fair, inaccurate translations of question 68 are not unique to Shapcote.

Why Instinctus is Key for Rightly Understanding a Gift-Habitus

Commentators from Edward Schillebeeckx to Andrew Pinsent explicitly reject translating *instinctus* as "instinct," although not all of them do so because of a perceived connection with animal instinct.³⁸ While the view that natural instinct and spiritual instinct are incompatible may make such commentators good Cartesians, it does not make them good Thomists. When Thomas comments on Rom 8:14, as to the meaning of "Those who are led by the Spirit of God become children of God," he says as follows:

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God," that is, as ruled by a General [*ductore*] and Commander, which the Spirit does in us, inasmuch as he enlightens us inwardly about what we ought to do: "let your good spirit lead me" (Ps 143:10).

However, on the one hand, one who is led [*ducitur*] is merely ordered what to do. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit not only instructs the spiritual person regarding what to do, but also moves the spiritual person's heart. Therefore, we need a better understanding of what is meant by "those who are led by the Spirit of God."

Those who are led [*dicuntur*] are moved by a higher instinct [*superiori instinctu*]. It is said of the beasts that they do not act but are acted upon, that they do not perform actions from their own motion. Similarly, the spiritual person does not move in the first place from his own motion, but is driven by the instinct of the Holy Spirit to act. As it says in Isaiah, "when the spirit of God comes he will compel us like a rushing river" (Isa 59:19), and in Luke: "Jesus was driven by the spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).³⁹

³⁸ In a review of Max Seckler's 1961 book *Instinct and Faith in Thomas Aquinas*, Schillebeeckx writes that "a modern reflection on faith will avoid the term 'instinct.'" See Pinckaers, *The Pinckaers Reader*, 386. Pinsent says: "The connotations evoked by the modern word 'instinct' are unhelpful, given the association of the word with the behavior of animals rather than the union of persons" (*Second Person Perspective*, 38). Even Mark Jordan says that *instinctus* "certainly cannot be rendered as our 'instinct,'" although he does not expressly say why ("Democratic Moral Education and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44, no. 2 [2016]: 246–59).

³⁹ Aquinas, *Super Rom* 8, lec. 3, Marietti no. 635. I am grateful to Dominic Legge, *The*

Here Thomas is telling us that as God moves non-human animals to their ends naturally and surely (i.e., connaturally), so even more the Holy Spirit moves—even compels—the children of God to their proper ends, and further moves their hearts, making the understanding of divine things connatural to the wayfarer. What does Aquinas mean by “moving their hearts?” For example, with regard to the gift of wisdom, it means the wayfarer is given connatural knowledge of divine things, to know God and other creatures from a divine standpoint. The gift of wisdom furthermore gives the wayfarer an affective experience of the goodness of God, enabling the wayfarer to taste the sweetness of God.⁴⁰

So, contrary to those who think the language of “instinct” is inappropriate for understanding how the Holy Spirit works in us, Aquinas's point is precisely to make the connection between animal instinct and spiritual instinct. Spiritual instinct is the supernatural analogate to natural instinct. God providentially gives other animals instincts to perfect them according to their specific nature. So too God equips wayfarers with the necessary instincts to fully perfect them. It is this instinct which enables wayfarers to act according to the divine nature, and to thus be led safely and securely to their appropriate end, that of perfect beatitude.

The Gift-*Habitus*: Perfecting the Wayfarer beyond the Limits of a Virtue-*Habitus*

In the previous section, I presented what Aquinas means by *instinctus* and how and why it is absolutely central to his account of the gifts. I argued that, without it, a proper understanding of Aquinas's view of the gifts is simply not possible. Furthermore, I presented extensive evidence that Shapcote's not translating *instinctus* as instinct has contributed to widespread ignorance among English-speaking Thomists regarding the significance, or even the existence, of spiritual instinct for Aquinas's account of the gifts and what constitutes a gift-*habitus*.

In this section, my argument proceeds from a close reading of *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 8, Thomas's analysis of the relationship between virtues and gifts. I shall present in detail Aquinas's extensive and fully consistent argument for the superiority of a gift-*habitus* to a virtue-*habitus*. Since this article is typically read very differently, it will be necessary for me to deconstruct

Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), for bringing this quote to my attention, as well as for his excellent translations.

⁴⁰ See *ST* II-II, q. 45, aa. 2 and 4.

Shapcote's translation as I proceed through this section. This genealogical reading of Shapcote's translation opens up the conceptual space necessary for readers to more fully engage my arguments regarding Aquinas's view of the relationship between a gift-*habitus* and a virtue-*habitus*. Secondly, we shall see how Shapcote's translation practically imposes a misreading of this article on unsuspecting readers who do not attend to the Latin. Furthermore, even for those who do attend to the Latin, Shapcote's translation continues to influence the language used, and thus the reading of the relationship between gifts and virtues. The problems with the Shapcote translation begin with the title of article 8, which is an interpolation into the text.

In Shapcote's translation, one reads that the topic of article 8 is "Are the Virtues *More Excellent* than the Gifts?" From this beginning, readers of Shapcote's translation are led to interpret this article in something like the following way: Aquinas's initial answer is that the gifts are more excellent than the virtues. But then Aquinas makes a distinction between theological virtues, on the one hand, and the intellectual and moral virtues, on the other (or between the infused virtues and the acquired virtues). And while the gifts of the Holy Spirit are more excellent than the latter, the theological virtues are superior to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For many scholars, this "standard reading" of this article settles the matter, and shapes their reading of the gifts more generally.

However, the following close examination of Shapcote's translation of article 8 seeks to show that the above "standard reading" of this article, no doubt influenced by Shapcote's translation, is seriously misleading. I present two translations of the title.

Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Utrum virtutes <i>sint praeferendae</i> donis	Whether the Virtues <i>Have Precedence</i> to the Gifts?	Whether the Virtues Are <i>More Excellent</i> than the gifts?

Contra Shapcote, *praeferendae* is not "more excellent," but rather means something like "precedes," "comes before," "is in front of," or "is prior to."⁴¹ It is a much weaker affirmation than "more excellent." When a comparison is to address degrees of perfection, Aquinas uses terms like *perfecta*, *eminentia*, or *excellencia*. This mistranslation of the title sets up the misreading of the entire article.

⁴¹ Note that any of these translations at times convey the sense of "is preferable to." *Praeferendae* typically connotes subjective preference, as it is used in the *ST* at times to express a preference for something less objectively worthy, or even something evil.

Aquinas's objections in article 8 have a specific logical relationship to each other.⁴²

Latin	Objections	Shapcote Translation
Videtur quod virtutes <i>sint praeferendae</i> donis. Dicit enim Augustinus, de caritate loquens, nullum est isto Dei dono <i>excel-lentius</i> Dantur et alia per spiritum sanctum munera, sed sine caritate nihil prosunt. Sed caritas est virtus. Ergo virtus est <i>potior</i> donis spiritus sancti.	Obj. 1: It seems that the virtues <i>should take precedence over</i> the gifts. Augustine, in speaking of charity, says: "There is no gift of God more <i>excellent</i> than this one.' . . . Other gifts are also given by the Holy Spirit, but without charity they count for nothing." But charity is a virtue. Therefore a virtue <i>ranks above</i> the gifts of the Holy Spirit.	Obj. 1: It would seem that the virtues are <i>more excellent than</i> the gifts. For Augustine says while speaking of charity: "No gift of God is <i>more excellent</i> than this. . . . Other gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit, but, without charity, they avail nothing." But charity is a virtue. Therefore a virtue is <i>more excellent than</i> the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Praeterea, ea quae <i>sunt priora naturaliter</i> , videntur esse <i>potiora</i> Ergo virtutes <i>sunt potiores</i> donis.	Obj. 2: Further, that which <i>by nature is prior</i> seems to be <i>of higher rank</i> Therefore the virtues <i>rank above</i> the gifts.	Obj. 2: Further, that which is <i>first naturally</i> , seems to be <i>more excellent</i> Therefore the virtues are <i>more excellent than</i> the gifts.
Praeterea, virtutibus nullus male uti potest, ut Augustinus dicit. . . . Ergo virtutes sunt <i>digniores</i> donis spiritus sancti.	Obj. 3: Further, Augustine says that <i>the virtues cannot be used to evil purpose</i> . Therefore the virtues <i>make suitable</i> the gifts of the Holy Spirit.	Obj. 3: Further, Augustine says that <i>the virtues cannot be used to evil purpose</i> . Therefore the virtues are <i>more excellent than</i> the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first objection asserts that the virtues precede the gifts because the gifts of the Holy Spirit presuppose the gift of charity. The objection concludes that, since charity is a virtue, it would seem that at least the virtue of charity ranks above the gifts. Note here that the heart of the objection is Augustine's

⁴² I have abbreviated the objections because my interest is twofold: first, to recognize the *topic* of the objection, and second, to recognize Aquinas's assumption regarding the magnitude of the objection, i.e., what conclusions would be drawn if the objection were to be sustained.

view that the gift of charity ranks above the *other* gifts of the Holy Spirit. Although the objection includes a quote from Augustine that “no gift of God is more excellent than the gift of charity,” the objection never repeats the language of “excellent,” but claims only that the gift of charity (and only charity is mentioned) *ranks higher* than the other gifts.⁴³ The second objection is that the virtues precede the gifts because they are by nature prior to the gifts. Since what precedes is in some sense a cause of what follows, and a cause is typically seen as greater than the effect, so the cause ranks higher. The third objection asserts that the virtues precede the gifts in that they are the necessary roots out of which the gifts must flower, that the gifts are limited to further perfecting only what the virtues initially perfect. It is crucial to note that none of these objections *even claim that the theological virtues are more excellent than the gifts*. The seemingly half-hearted nature of the objections offer a clue as to what we can expect in Aquinas’s response.

With seemingly no serious objection to address, Aquinas’s response systematically lays out the relationship between the virtues and the gifts, and will do so using an important and original analogy.⁴⁴ I will work slowly through his response, analyzing it in three parts. After that, I turn to Thomas’s response to objections, showing how they further support his argument. Finally, I return to Aquinas’s initial answer (the *sed contra*), reading it in light of his full response and replies.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Potiori* is an interesting and somewhat puzzling choice of terms, especially if it has a military connotation.

⁴⁴ According to O’Connor, this analogy is original and highly innovative, an innovation that could occur only once Thomas established that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like the virtues, are a kind of *habitus* (“Appendix 4,” 122–24).

⁴⁵ The attentive reader will notice that I divide up the response differently than does Shapcote (in the Latin the response is not divided up into separate paragraphs). Shapcote’s division of paragraphs makes it appear that his conclusion pertains only to the other infused (or even merely the acquired) virtues. I have divided the response differently for four reasons. First, it more adequately holds together the analogy that is central to the response. Second, it cleanly separates the discussion of “precedence” from “perfection” and avoids the translation’s confusion with regard to different types of comparisons. Third, in Latin, *quia* normally begins a sentence where the definitive reason for one’s conclusion is being provided, and thus is the logical place to begin a new paragraph. Fourth, the way I divide the response actually answers the question that is presumed in the rest of the response, that the comparison being made in the article is between the theological virtues and the gifts.

	Respondeo Part I	
Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Respondeo . . . sunt enim quaedam virtutes theologicae, quaedam intellectuales, quaedam morales. Virtutes quidem theologicae sunt quibus mens humana Deo coniungitur; virtutes autem intellectuales sunt quibus ratio ipsa <i>perficitur</i>; virtutes autem morales sunt quibus vires appetitivae <i>perficiuntur</i> ad obediendum rationi.	I answer that, . . . some are theological, some intellectual, and some moral. The theological virtues are those whereby man's mind is conjoined to God; the intellectual virtues are those whereby reason itself is <i>perfected</i>; and the moral virtues are those which <i>perfect</i> the powers of appetite in obedience to the reason.	I answer that . . . some are theological, some intellectual, and some moral. The theological virtues are those whereby man's mind is united to God; the intellectual virtues are those whereby reason itself is <i>perfected</i>; and the moral virtues are those which <i>perfect</i> the powers of appetite in obedience to the reason.
Dona autem spiritus sancti sunt quibus omnes vires animae disponuntur ad hoc quod subdantur motioni divinae.	On the other hand, the gifts of the Holy Spirit dispose all the powers of the soul <i>to be subject to</i> the Divine motion.	On the other hand the gifts of the Holy Spirit dispose all the powers of the soul <i>to be amenable to</i> the Divine motion.
Sic ergo eadem videtur esse <i>comparatio</i> donorum ad virtutes theologicas, per quas homo utitur spirituali sancto moventi; sicut virtutum moralium ad virtutes intellectuales, per quas <i>perficitur</i> ratio, quae est virtutum moralium motiva.	In the same way, therefore, that the gifts <i>are related to</i> the theological virtues (which conjoin a human being to the moving Holy Spirit), the moral virtues <i>are related to</i> the intellectual virtues (which <i>perfect</i> the reason, and which move the moral virtues).	Accordingly the gifts <i>seem to be compared to</i> the theological virtues, by which man is united to the Holy Spirit his Mover, in the same way as the moral virtues <i>are compared to</i> the intellectual virtues, which <i>perfect</i> the reason, the moving principle of the moral virtues.
Unde sicut virtutes intellectuales <i>praefereuntur</i> virtutibus moralibus, et regulant eas; ita virtutes theologicae <i>praefereuntur</i> donis spiritus sancti, et regulant ea.	As the intellectual virtues <i>have precedence to</i> the moral virtues and direct them, so the theological virtues <i>have precedence to</i> the gifts of the Holy Spirit and direct them.	As the intellectual virtues are <i>more excellent</i> than the moral virtues and control them, so the theological virtues are <i>more excellent</i> than the gifts of the Holy Spirit and regulate them.

Aquinas begins by describing the functions of the various virtues and gifts: theological virtues conjoin (*coniungitur*) the wayfarer's mind to God; intellectual virtues perfect (*perficitur*) reason; moral virtues perfect (*perficiuntur*) the appetites to obey reason; and gifts dispose all the wayfarer's powers to be subject to (*subdantur*) the Holy Spirit. The standard translation reads *subdantur* as "amenable," which implies merely an openness to being led, such that the one being led could simply decide otherwise. But *subdantur*, with its military connotation, means that being "subject to" is like the relationship between the private and the general, or between the servant and the master. Here we see that there is no easy way to compare the virtues and gifts, because they operate in such different ways.

Despite these difficulties, Aquinas comes up with a way to relate the virtues and the gifts *analogically*. His analogy is that, as the intellectual virtues are to the moral virtues, so the theological virtues are to the gifts.

Intellectual Virtues : Moral Virtues :: Theological Virtues : Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Since Aquinas's goal is to understand the relationship between the theological virtues and the gifts, we should begin with an examination of the analogates, the intellectual and moral virtues. This is a relatively straightforward task, because Aquinas has painstakingly laid out their relationship in a number of articles just prior to the discussion of the gifts.

*Aquinas's Gift-Virtue Analogy Part I:
The Analogy with Intellectual and Moral Virtue*

Aquinas's analogy is based on three aspects of the relationship between the intellectual and moral virtues:

1. The intellectual virtues precede (*praeferuntur*) the moral virtues.
2. The intellectual and moral virtues need each other to function well.
3. Each is more perfect (*perficitur*) than the other, but in different ways.

The intellectual virtues precede (praeferuntur) the moral virtues. Discussing the relationship between the quasi-intellectual virtue of prudence in relation to the other moral virtues, Aquinas says that intellectual virtue precedes (*praeferitur*) moral virtue, because one must apprehend the good before one can act to pursue it.⁴⁶ Aquinas also uses *praeferitur* to compare the

⁴⁶ ST I-II, q. 66, a. 1: "The cause and root of human goodness is reason. Thus, since prudence perfects the reason, its goodness precedes [*praeferitur*] the goodness of the

theological virtues and gifts. As noted above, *praeferetur* connotes primarily a logical relationship (e.g., in terms of formal causality), rather than one of degree of perfection. Prudence is *praeferetur* to the other moral virtues because its exercise is a necessary pre-condition for the exercise of the other moral virtues.⁴⁷ We find analogous distinctions stated in terms of *praeferetur* elsewhere in the *ST*: intellect precedes will; knowledge precedes love; and Christ as Word (who is associated with intellect) precedes the Holy Spirit as Gift (who is associated with will).

The intellectual and moral virtues need each other to function well. While acknowledging the initial priority of the intellectual to the moral virtues, it is not a continuing priority. Although initially “budding” moral virtues must be directed by “budding” prudence, from then on there is a circular or mutual relationship and dependence between the intellectual and moral virtues. For prudence to reason well—that is, to actually function as prudence—it must be already directed to the right end. In other words, the wayfarer’s loves must be rightly ordered. To be directed to the right ends, and to avoid straying from them, the wayfarer needs the moral virtues to guide the intellectual virtues.⁴⁸ Aquinas makes it clear that intellectual virtue is not prior to moral virtue in all senses.

Further, “every act of the will is preceded [*praeceditur*] by an act of the intellect: but a certain act of the will precedes [*priori*] a certain act of the intellect. For the will tends to the final act of the intellect, which is beatitude. And consequently right inclination of the will is required antecedently for beatitude, just as the arrow must take a right course in order to strike the target.”⁴⁹ This should lead us to conclude that “come before” is referring not to degrees of excellence, but to different forms of causality. Whereas the intellectual virtues “come before” in terms of formal causality, the moral virtues “come before” in terms of the necessary disposition, i.e., efficient causality.

The intellectual and moral virtues are each more perfect (perficitur) than the other. This third point further supports the above claim. Aquinas explicitly

other moral virtues, which perfect the appetitive power, insofar as the appetitive power partakes of reason.”

⁴⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 58, a. 4: “There can be no moral virtue without prudence.” In a. 2, he says, “in the same way that appetite is distinguished from reason, so moral virtue is distinguished from intellectual virtue.”

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 65, a. 1: “One cannot have prudence unless one has the moral virtues: since prudence is right reason about things to be done, and the starting point of reason is the end or thing to be done, to which end one is rightly disposed by moral virtue.”

⁴⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 4, a. 4, ad 2.

asks if the intellectual virtues are “pre-eminent” (*praeeminent*) in relation to the moral virtues.⁵⁰ Or more literally, do the intellectual virtues “stand out the more”? His answer is a stalemate of sorts, related to the point above regarding causality. On the one hand, the intellectual virtues are inherently more noble (*nobilior*), because they are more purely rational, which is the wayfarer’s essential nature as an intellectual creature. But the moral virtues are more noble (*nobilior*) as a principle of human action, because to be a principle of action is closer to the essence of a virtue. In other words, moral virtues are those that people first think of as virtues because it is moral virtues that dispose us to act well.⁵¹ To put this more technically, the intellectual virtues, like the intellect more generally, “come before” at the level of specification. However, the moral virtues, like the will more generally, “come before” at the level of exercise.⁵²

*Aquinas’s Gift–Virtue Analogy Part II:
Applying the Analogy to the Theological Virtues and Gifts*

Returning to the question of the relationship between the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let us examine the same three points for the analogical relationship:

⁵⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 66, a. 3.

⁵¹ In *ST* I-II, q. 58, a. 4, Aquinas says that “moral” has two meanings: it can refer to a natural inclination or quasi-natural inclination of the appetitive power to some particular action, or it can refer to a societal custom. He says the second meaning is similar to the first, in that customs become a “second nature” and become like natural inclinations. So moral virtues have to do with directing our appetitive powers to good actions. But, for moral virtues to function, they require at least two of the intellectual virtues—prudence and understanding. They require these intellectual virtues because, in order for the wayfarer’s moral virtues to guide her appetites correctly (what she does according to moral virtues), the wayfarer must reason adequately about the ends to be sought, and that requires these intellectual virtues. As he summarizes it in ad 1, “the inclination of moral virtue is with choice: consequently in order that it may be perfect it requires that reason be perfected by intellectual virtue.” Aquinas puts the matter more vividly in ad 3: “The natural inclination to a good of virtue is a kind of beginning of virtue, but is not perfect virtue. For the stronger this inclination is, the more perilous may it prove to be, unless it be accompanied by right reason, which rectifies the choice of fitting means towards the due end. Thus if a running horse be blind, the faster it runs the more heavily will it fall, and the more grievously will it be hurt.”

⁵² Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 169–70, has been very helpful in terms of articulating this point more lucidly than I otherwise could have done. On this point, see also Daniel Westberg, “Did Aquinas Change His Mind about the Will,” *The Thomist*, 58, no. 1 (1994): 41–60.

1. Do the theological virtues precede the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
2. Do the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit need each other to function well?
3. Are the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit each more perfect (*perficitur*) than the other?

Do the theological virtues precede the gifts? While Aquinas clearly states, “so the theological virtues come before [*praeferuntur*] the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” do they “come before” as the intellectual virtues come before the moral virtues? Aquinas likens the relationship between the theological virtues and the gifts to (1) the precedence of the procession and mission of the Son to those of the Holy Spirit, and (2) the precedence of intellect to will.⁵³ This, as seen above, implies the same logical relationship, such as one of formal causality, as with the relationship between the intellectual and moral virtues. On the other hand, it is Aquinas’s view that the wayfarer receives a theological-virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* simultaneously at baptism. If that is so, how can the theological virtues “come before” the gifts?

With these two points in mind, there are three different ways one can assert their precedence. First, since charity is also the form of the gifts, the wayfarer must perform acts of charity before the wayfarer can act according to a gift-*habitus*.⁵⁴ Second, charity regulates the gifts, in that the instinct of the Holy Spirit in the wayfarer perfects her in a way consonant with charity. Third, the wayfarer must have considerable facility in the theological and other infused virtues before developing facility in the gifts, because the gifts further perfect the wayfarer who is already living out the theological and other infused virtues. If the wayfarer does not possess these virtues, what can the gifts perfect?

Do the theological virtues and the gifts need each other to function well? Here again the analogy works well. Aquinas says that the theological virtues need the guidance and power of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be rightly and consistently guided to the supernatural end.⁵⁵ If that were not the case,

⁵³ This passage continues by referring to the divine missions of Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are the source of all charity: “The gift of charity which is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, and by the gift of wisdom, which is appropriated to the Son: so that each work belongs by appropriation, but under different aspects, both to the Son and to the Holy Spirit” (*ST* II-II, q. 1, a. 8, ad 5).

⁵⁴ See *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 4. It is debatable whether in this context charity should be understood more properly as a virtue or as a divine gift.

⁵⁵ Without the gifts, the theological virtues are unable to safeguard the wayfarer from

then it would make no sense to insist that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation.⁵⁶

So, as with the relationship between the intellectual and moral virtues, the theological virtues and the gifts have a reciprocal relationship. And thus similarly, at least initially the theological virtues, like the intellectual virtues, precede acts of the gifts of the Holy Spirit—a priority in terms of formal causality. On the other hand, like with the moral virtues, the gifts and their perfecting power are required antecedently for beatitude. So, as with the moral virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit “come before” in terms of efficient causality.

Are the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit each more perfect than the other, but in a different way? In the immediate context of the first part of the response in *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 8, the full analogy is not spelled out. Here the focus is on charity regulating the gifts. This is a partial response to objection 3, reminding the reader that the gifts always function in harmony with the theological virtues, that they cannot be turned to evil purposes.

As noted above, in the first part of the response, Aquinas does not complete the analogy in that he says nothing about the superiority of the gifts to the theological virtues. It is when we get to the third part of the response that we will see Aquinas complete the parallel. That is, while here he affirms that the theological virtues precede the gifts at the level of specification, there he will affirm that the gifts precede the theological virtues at the level of exercise.

	Respondeo Part II	
Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Sed si <i>comparemus</i> dona ad alias virtutes intellectuales vel morales, dona <i>praeferuntur</i> virtutibus.	But if we <i>relate</i> the gifts to other virtues, intellectual or moral, then the gifts <i>have precedence to</i> the virtues.	But if we <i>compare</i> the gifts to the other virtues, intellectual and moral, then the gifts have <i>the precedence of</i> the virtues.

In this second part of the *respondeo*, following the analogy, Aquinas “tidies up” the formal relationships by noting that “the gifts precede [*praeferuntur*] the other [infused] virtues.” So in terms of formal causality:

sinning. “Human reason as perfected . . . by the theological virtues . . . is unable to avoid folly and other like things” (*ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2 ad 3).

⁵⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 3.

theological virtues → gifts of the Holy Spirit → infused intellectual and moral virtues

This completes his discussion about precedence in terms of formal causality.⁵⁷

Having now almost completed the analogy, Aquinas comes to his conclusion regarding the relationship between the gifts and virtues. Aquinas is here again repeating his argument that the gifts have a superior principle of motion (that is, spiritual instinct), an argument he has reiterated consistently in his question on the gifts.

Respondeo Part III		
Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Quia dona <i>perficiunt</i> vires animae in <i>comparatione</i> ad spiritum sanctum moventem, virtutes autem <i>perficiunt</i> vel ipsam rationem, vel alias vires in ordine ad rationem. Manifestum est autem quod ad altioiorem motorem oportet maiori <i>perfectione</i> mobile esse dispositum. Unde <i>perfectiora</i> sunt dona virtutibus.	To conclude: the gifts <i>perfect</i> the soul's powers <i>in relation to</i> the moving Holy Spirit, whereas the virtues <i>perfect</i> reason itself or other powers in accordance with the order of reason. Also, it is obviously necessary that the loftier the Mover, the greater the <i>perfection</i> with which the one moved be thus disposed. Thus the gifts are <i>more perfect</i> than the virtues.	Because the gifts <i>perfect</i> the soul's powers <i>in relation to</i> the Holy Spirit their Mover; whereas the virtues <i>perfect</i>, either the reason itself, or the other powers in relation to reason: and it is evident that the more exalted the mover, the <i>more excellent the</i> disposition whereby the thing moved requires to be disposed. Therefore the gifts are <i>more perfect</i> than the virtues.

A striking feature of this conclusion is that here Aquinas's key terminology diverges from the rest of the response. Up to this point in his response, the relationship between virtues and gifts has been described in terms of precedence, with the language of perfection used only to compare different kinds

⁵⁷ Note that, here, Aquinas again makes it abundantly clear that he has in mind the *infused* intellectual and moral virtues. For, the theological virtues and gifts clearly do not precede the acquired virtues in terms of formal causality, since nature precedes grace. Rather, the infused virtues precede the acquired virtues in terms of their perfection.

of virtues. But here in the conclusion, the language of perfection dominates. Here Aquinas works out the logic of perfection in all the relationships he has discussed in the response. And his conclusion, which necessarily follows from his argument of superior motion, is that the gifts are more perfect than the virtues.

Arguably, this is the most significant argument in the entire question on the gifts. Thus, it is fitting that it appears here, since this response concludes not merely this article, but the entire discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here he completes his analogy that argues for the superiority of the gifts to the theological virtues.

Having drawn our conclusions regarding Aquinas's analogy, it is now time to draw conclusions about Shapcote's translation. Readers may well wish to contest my translation of *praeferuntur* as something to the effect of "precedes" rather than "more excellent." However, readers should be aware that there is strong evidence for the accuracy of my translation from Shapcote himself. He provides us with two pieces of evidence to seriously question his translation at this point.

First, we note that *praeferunder* or a variant appears around 140 times in the *ST*. Of these 140 uses by Aquinas, Shapcote translates *praeferuntur* as "prefers," "precedes," "stands before," or the like around 125 times. That is almost 90 percent of the time. On the other hand, Shapcote translates *praeferuntur* as "more excellent" only six times in the entire *ST*, about 4 percent. Furthermore, the majority of all of his uses of "more excellent" occur in this very article. In other words, his translation of "more excellent" for *praeferuntur* in the *ST* is practically unique to this article.

Secondly, we see contradictions when *praeferuntur* is translated as "more excellent." In article 8, "virtutes intellectuales praeferuntur virtutibus moralibus" is translated as "the intellectual virtues *are more excellent than* the moral virtues." However, in article 7, the *exact* same Latin phrase has been translated as "the intellectual virtues *have the precedence of* the moral virtues."

These two data—how *praeferuntur* is translated more generally in the *ST* and the fact that contradictory translations are provided on the few occasions that *praeferuntur* is translated as "more excellent"—constitute strong evidence that the translation is highly problematic, at least as a literal translation. Add that to the fact that, in article 8, five different Latin terms are translated as "more excellent than," and it seems clear that this English translation should not be relied on as a *translation* of Aquinas's claims regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

With regard to Shapcote's translation, my conclusion is that regardless of whether my particular reading is fully convincing, further study of this

question will need to rethink how to translate question 68. It would also seem to follow that scholarship on the gifts and their relation to the theological and other infused virtues that has followed Shapcote's translation will need to be reconsidered. Furthermore, I contend that almost all scholarly work on the gifts in English appears to accept Shapcote's translation. If I am correct, then English-language scholarship on the gifts will require some re-evaluation.

*Aquinas Confirms and Develops His Case
for the Superiority of Gift-Habitus to Virtue-Habitus*

	Reply to Objections	
Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Ad primum ergo dicendum quod caritas est virtus theologica; de qua concedimus quod sit <i>potior</i> donis.	Reply Obj. 1: Now, it is said that charity is a theological virtue; and charity we concede <i>ranks above</i> the gifts.	Reply Obj. 1: Charity is a theological virtue; and such we grant to be more <i>perfect</i> than the gifts.

Table continued overleaf

Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Ad secundum dicendum quod aliquid est <i>prius</i> altero dupliciter. Uno modo, ordine <i>perfectionis</i> et dignitatis, sicut dilectio Dei est <i>prior</i> dilectione proximi. Et hoc modo dona sunt <i>priora</i> virtutibus intellectualibus et moralibus, posteriora vero virtutibus theologicis. Alio modo, ordine generationis seu dispositionis, sicut dilectio proximi <i>praecedat</i> dilectionem Dei, quantum ad actum. Et sic virtutes morales et intellectuales <i>praecedunt</i> dona, quia per hoc quod homo bene se habet circa rationem propriam, disponitur ad hoc quod se bene habeat in ordine ad Deum.	Reply Obj. 2: There are two ways in which one thing <i>is prior to</i> another. In one way, it is prior in the order of perfection and dignity, in the way that love of God <i>is prior to</i> the love of neighbor: and in this sense the gifts <i>are prior to</i> the intellectual and moral virtues, though <i>posterior to</i> the theological virtues. In the second way, something is prior in the order of generation or <i>habitus</i> in the way that the love of neighbor <i>precedes</i> love of God as far as acts are concerned. In this sense the moral and intellectual virtues <i>precede</i> the gifts. For by the fact that a man has the right relation to his own reason he is disposed towards having the right relation to God.	Reply Obj. 2: There are two ways in which one thing <i>precedes</i> another. One is in order of <i>perfection</i> and dignity, as love of God <i>precedes</i> love of our neighbor: and in this way the gifts <i>precede</i> the intellectual and moral virtues, but <i>follow</i> the theological virtues. The other is the order of generation or disposition: thus love of one's neighbor <i>precedes</i> love of God, as regards the act: and in this way moral and intellectual virtues <i>precede</i> the gifts, since man, through being well subordinate to his own reason, is disposed to be rightly subordinate to God.
Ad tertium dicendum quod sapientia et intellectus et alia huiusmodi sunt dona spiritus sancti, secundum quod caritate informantur; quae non agit perperam, ut dicitur I ad Cor. XIII. Et ideo sapientia et intellectu et aliis huiusmodi nullus male utitur, secundum quod sunt dona spiritus sancti. Sed ad hoc quod a caritatis <i>perfectione</i> non recedant, unum ab altero adiuatur. Et hoc est quod Gregorius dicere intendit.	Reply Obj. 3: Wisdom and understanding and the like are gifts of the Holy Spirit, after they are formed by charity, "which deals not perversely" (1 Cor 13:4). And so no one can make bad use of wisdom and understanding and the like insofar as they are gifts of the Holy Spirit. But one gift is aided by another in order that they not withdraw from the <i>perfection</i> of charity. And this is what Gregory intends to say.	Reply Obj. 3: Wisdom and understanding and the like are gifts of the Holy Spirit, according as they are quickened by charity, which "dealeth not perversely" (1 Cor 13:4). Consequently wisdom and understanding and the like cannot be used to evil purpose, insofar as they are gifts of the Holy Spirit. But, lest they depart from the <i>perfection</i> of charity, they assist one another. This is what Gregory means to say.

First Response—Charity Is Also a Gift. While the first objection contended that a virtue ranked above the gifts, in that objection Aquinas does not affirm that charity as a virtue ranks above the gifts. In the objection, Aquinas says that the gift of charity ranks above the other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Combined with what he says elsewhere, I contend that Aquinas is speaking of charity as a gift and not as a virtue. This requires an analysis of why Aquinas would distinguish the gift of charity from the virtue of charity. He distinguishes them because all virtue-habitus have inherent limits that are not inherent in the gifts. Thus charity, if it is to be fully perfected in the wayfarer, must increasingly function from a gift-habitus rather than from a virtue-habitus. This evolution will occur as the wayfarer increasingly grows in moral and spiritual perfection. To that I now turn.

As discussed earlier, Aquinas says that the distinguishing feature of all gifts as opposed to all virtues is the source of motion, what Aquinas refers to as the *manner* or *mode* of being moved.⁵⁸ There are two important conclusions to be drawn from this. First, some kinds of human excellences—depending on the “mover”—will operate either as virtues or as gifts. In other words, an act of wisdom can arise either from a virtue-habitus or from a gift-habitus. But it cannot operate as both at the same time. The same is true with charity. An act of charity can follow from either a virtue-habitus or a gift-habitus.

In *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, when comparing the theological virtue-habitus to the gift-habitus, Aquinas emphasizes the reason-driven character of the theological virtues. In his contrast between a virtue-habitus and gift-habitus, Aquinas says explicitly that, whereas reason is the mode of virtue-habitus, God is the mode of gift-habitus.⁵⁹ As he puts it:

⁵⁸ In the article where Aquinas makes his categorical distinction between a gift-habitus and a virtue-habitus, he responds to the objection that many of the gifts also seem to be virtues. Gifts such as “wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are intellectual virtues, counsel pertains to prudence, piety to a kind of justice, and fortitude is a moral virtue. Therefore it seems that the gifts do not differ from the virtues” (*ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1, obj. 4). To this, Aquinas responds that, while wisdom is to be considered a virtue to the extent it operates according to the judgments of reasoning, “on the other hand, it is called a gift insofar as it operates from a divinely inspired instinct” (ad 4). Aquinas then says that this principle applies to the other virtues.

⁵⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1. Contemporary scholars such as William Mattison, John Meinert, and Anton ten Klooster claim that, in this article, Aquinas is only distinguishing gift-habitus from acquired virtue-habitus (see, e.g., Meinert, “*Donum Habituele: Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in St. Thomas Aquinas*” [PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2015], 78–83, later published as *The Love of God Poured Out: Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in St. Thomas Aquinas* [Steubenville, OH: Emmaus

In matters directed to the supernatural end, to which man's reason moves him, according as it is, in a mode, and imperfectly, informed by the theological virtues, the motion of reason does not suffice, unless it receive in addition the instinct and motion of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁰

Thus the conclusion that in terms of the wayfarer's ability to act charitably, Aquinas's view is that reason is the mode of the *virtue* of charity.⁶¹

Besides his claim that the exercise of any and all virtues is constrained by the inherent limits of a wayfarer's reason, there is a second way in which the exercise of the specifically theological and other infused virtues is limited. Since God is the end of the theological virtues, they are especially limited because of the difficulty of pursuing the supernatural end according to the mode of human reason. Aquinas confirms this point when he compares the acquired and infused virtues. By the acquired virtues, humans can strive only for the goods of their nature, that is, acts that are *connatural* to the power of human reason.⁶² When by grace the wayfarer is given the assistance of the theological and other infused virtues, her reason is given an additional supernatural perfection by the theological virtues, but it is possessed more imperfectly because of the nature of the end being pursued:

Now there are two ways in which human reason is perfected by God: (1) by its natural perfection, that is, in accord with the natural light of reason, and (2) as was explained above [q. 62, a. 1], by a certain supernatural perfection through the theological virtues. Even though this second sort of perfection is greater [*maior*] than the first, nonetheless, the first is had in a more perfect way than is the second. For a human being fully possesses the first sort of perfection, as it were, whereas the second is possessed imperfectly, since we love and know God imperfectly.⁶³

Academic, 2018]). However, Aquinas says in his response that the point is to find a distinguishing criterion "which would apply to all the virtues, and to none of the gifts, or vice versa." Furthermore, in the *sed contra* of a. 1, Aquinas explicitly states that the point is to distinguish the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit "from the three theological virtues, . . . [and] from the four cardinal virtues."

⁶⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

⁶¹ This logic also of course applies to all other virtues.

⁶² *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 2. As Aquinas puts it, God bestows "on each thing the form whereby it is inclined to the end appointed to it by God."

⁶³ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

Note that, in this passage, Aquinas says explicitly that, through the virtue-*habitus* by which the theological virtues operate, human reason is given a “supernatural perfection.” In other words, human reason is not simply superseded. Rather, reason is given an additional form of perfection. This also confirms by claim that, when it is a virtue-*habitus* moving charity (or other infused virtues), human reason definitively limits the exercise of charity itself.

It is specifically at this point, where Aquinas acknowledges the inherent limits of a virtue-*habitus*, that he distinguishes acts of charity which can operate according to a virtue-*habitus* from acts of charity that operate according to a gift-*habitus*. While it is true that both the wayfarer's acts of charity and the wayfarer's possession of the virtue of charity are limited in her earthly life, they are limited in different ways. On the one hand, while we receive supernatural aid to act according to the virtue of charity, as *rational* agents we are limited as vessels of this supernatural aid to perform acts of charity. On the other hand, the wayfarer's ability to perform acts of charity is not ultimately constrained by the limitations of a virtue-*habitus*, because the Holy Spirit bestows on wayfarers gift-*habitus*, through which wayfarers can further perfect their exercise of acts of charity.

We see Aquinas pointing in this direction when he begins to increasingly emphasize in the *prima secundae* (and especially in the *secunda secundae*) the gift character of charity.⁶⁴ At the beginning of his questions on faith, he says that “the sanctification of a creature by grace, and its consummation by glory, is also effected by the gift of charity.”⁶⁵ Why would Aquinas so regularly speak of the gift of charity, if the *virtue* of charity were sufficient? After his discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in question 68, Aquinas increasingly emphasizes the gift character of charity.⁶⁶ Especially in the

⁶⁴ This is not to say that Aquinas's conviction regarding the unsurpassing goodness of charity as a gift is not already present in the first part of the *ST*. For example, one reads in I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2: “Because the Holy Spirit is Love [*Amor*], it is by the gift of charity that the soul is assimilated to the Holy Spirit, hence, accordingly the gift of charity parallels the mission of the Holy Spirit [Et quia Spiritus Sanctus est amor, per donum caritatis anima spiritui sancto assimilatur, unde secundum donum caritatis attenditur missio Spiritus Sancti].”

⁶⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 1, a. 8 ad 5. This passage continues by referring to the divine missions of Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are the source of all charity: “The gift of charity which is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, and by the gift of wisdom, which is appropriated to the Son: so that each work belongs by appropriation, but under different aspects, both to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” Aquinas consistently refers to the mission of the Son as prior to the mission of the Spirit, as wisdom precedes charity (III, q. 7, a. 13).

⁶⁶ Aquinas's references to the gift of charity (as opposed to the virtue of charity) increase

secunda secundae, Aquinas repeatedly speaks of the perfection of charity as requiring not only a virtue-*habitus*, but beyond that a gift-*habitus*. I present only one example of this development in the *secunda secundae*.

... Uncreated Wisdom [i.e., the Holy Spirit], which in the first place unites itself to us by the gift of charity, and consequently reveals to us the mysteries the knowledge of which is infused wisdom. Hence, the infused wisdom which is a gift is not the cause but the effect of charity.⁶⁷

Infused wisdom is for Aquinas a gift of the Holy Spirit. The charity here gifted by the Holy Spirit builds on, but also extends beyond, the virtue of charity in terms of its degree of perfection. For as a virtue charity is unable to give us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as charity is not merely a virtue but also the form of all the virtues, so too it is charity that unites all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And in discussing how charity unites the gifts, charity is not referred to as a virtue, but as itself a gift. Here Aquinas makes a direct and unmediated connection between the charity that is the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's gifts: "The Holy Spirit dwells in us by charity, according to Rom 5:5: 'The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Who is given to us.'"⁶⁸

Second Response—Generative versus Perfective Priority: Aquinas's second objection was that, since nature is prior to grace, so the virtues (which are directed at least in part by reason) have precedence to the gifts, which are directed by the Holy Spirit. Aquinas says we can look at priority in two ways. Something can be prior temporally (what Aquinas calls "the order of generation"), or prior in "the order of perfection." Aquinas uses the example of the relationship between love of God and that of neighbor to show the difference. Whereas the love of neighbor is prior in the order of generation, the love of God is prior in terms of perfection. So the gifts are prior to the infused virtues, because the gifts are more focused on the love of God than are the infused virtues.⁶⁹

not only in the rest of the *ST*, but in a number of his other late works. An analysis of this development is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁶⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 6, ad 2.

⁶⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 5.

⁶⁹ At this point Aquinas adds that the theological virtues are prior to the gifts, because in terms of ordering our love of God, the theological virtues must function prior to the gifts being able to further perfect the love of God. But note that Aquinas refers to the

Third Response—Why Charity and the Gifts Need Each Other. Here Aquinas confirms that charity brings the gifts to life, and the gifts perfect charity in the wayfarer. Aquinas here is speaking of how charity in itself needs perfection by gift-*habitus*, rather than a virtue-*habitus*. We shall see how Aquinas very strongly confirms this view in the next main section of the paper.

The Gifts Are Superior in Remedying the Virtues

Having shown how the replies confirm Aquinas's answer, we now finally address his direct answer to the question posed at the beginning of the *ST* I-II, q, 68, a. 8: do the virtues have precedence to the gifts?

	Sed Contra	
Latin	Revised Translation	Shapcote Translation
Sed contra est quod dona dantur in adiutorium virtutum contra defectus . . . et sic videtur quod <i>perficiant</i> quod virtutes <i>perficere</i> non possunt. Sunt ergo dona <i>potiora</i> virtutibus.	On the contrary, The gifts are bestowed to assist the virtues and to remedy certain defects, . . . so it seems that they <i>perfect</i> what the virtues are not able to <i>perfect</i> . Therefore the gifts <i>rank above</i> the virtues.	On the contrary, The gifts are bestowed to assist the virtues and to remedy certain defects . . . so that, seemingly, <i>they accomplish</i> what the virtues <i>cannot</i> . Therefore the gifts <i>are more excellent than</i> the virtues.

At this point, we can summarize the three ways in which the gifts are superior to the virtues. With regard to the first way in which a gift-*habitus* is superior to a virtue-*habitus*, we have already seen in the first section on *instinctus* that the gifts are superior in their mode of action. Second, whereas the inferior motion of the virtues necessarily leads to defects of reason, leading to sin and error, or at least not doing the most charitable acts, the motion of the gifts generates consistently good acts. Third, the gifts are more perfect than any and all of the virtues (note that they are not more perfect than the *acts* of charity), since, if and when the wayfarer acts receptively to the gifts, she can perform greater acts of charity than are possible when she acts according to her reason through the virtues, even when those virtues are infused with God's grace.

theological virtues only in one of the comparisons, because the theological virtues do not fully fit into the schema of contrasting the gifts and the other infused virtues.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The More Excellent *Habitus*

To make sense of how Aquinas thinks about the relationship between the theological virtues and the gifts, we must understand two distinctions between an acquired virtue-*habitus*, on the one hand, and a theological virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus*, on the other. With an acquired virtue-*habitus*, such as justice, a person must act justly in a regular and stable way before the person can be said to have the acquired virtue of justice. In other words, with acquired virtues, acts precede the *habitus*. With theological virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus*, it is the opposite. For, the wayfarer is not able to perform acts of either a theological virtue-*habitus* or a gift-*habitus* before she receives the infused *habitus*. Only after receiving a theological virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* in baptism can the wayfarer perform acts of theological virtues or gifts. Which leads us to the second distinction.

Second, upon receiving them, the wayfarer likely has little or no facility to act in accord with the infused virtues and gifts.⁷⁰ She will find it difficult to act according to the theological and other infused virtues for two reasons. First, growth in any virtue requires habituation. Second, the theological and other infused virtues are disproportionate to human nature, and thus it is more difficult to perfect the infused virtues than it is to perfect the acquired virtues.⁷¹

In addition, wayfarers baptized as adults who have little facility with the

⁷⁰ One example of those who will have no facility to act according to infused virtues and gifts initially are those persons baptized as infants, who have no facility to perform any human acts (as Aquinas defines human acts). Besides the case of infants, Aquinas also assigns the infused virtues and gifts to human persons who never in their lives are able to perform a human act, those persons with a severe mental illness (*furiosi*) or with a severe mental impairment (*amentes*). Those who are without the use of reason “from birth, and have no lucid intervals, and show no signs of the use of reason” should be baptized for the same reason the Church baptizes infants. In baptism, those without the use of reason are given the gift of wisdom (II-II, q. 45, a. 5, ad 3). Those with the gift of wisdom do not need intellectual virtues, since they have this wisdom connaturally (a. 2, resp.). The gift-*habitus* of wisdom is fitting for infants because, in “being reared from childhood in things pertaining to the Christian mode of life, they may the more easily persevere therein” (III, q. 68, a. 9). Baptism regenerates the Christian infant and gives them a “leg up” on their wayfaring through life, assisting them in persevering in the Christian life. Persons with a severe mental impairment who have been baptized have been cleansed from original sin. Furthermore, they have been endowed with the Holy Spirit’s gift of wisdom as a *habitus* in their soul, and they are also unable to sin. Since those persons with a severe mental impairment are unable to separate themselves from the love of God, they may be seen as sacramental icons of heavenly life.

⁷¹ See *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2. The relevant passage is quoted later in this section.

acquired virtues will also struggle to act in accord with the newly received infused virtues-*habitus* and gift-*habitus*. The notion of having a *habitus* and yet not being able to act according to it will be strange at best to those whose paradigm of a *habitus* is an acquired virtue (or vice), but it is essential to Aquinas's account of infused virtues and gifts.

Do Infused Virtues and Gifts Operate Simultaneously?

Aquinas's assertion that the wayfarer receives both the infused virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus* at baptism raises a whole series of questions: Although a wayfarer possesses both *habitus* simultaneously, does the wayfarer act according to both simultaneously? Or must the wayfarer act according to one *habitus* or the other at any one time? If the former, can the wayfarer act increasingly according to both *habitus* simultaneously? If the latter, does the wayfarer suddenly stop acting according to the one *habitus* and start acting according to the other *habitus*? If so, is this a change that occurs only occasionally, or does the wayfarer constantly go back and forth from acting according to the virtue-*habitus* to the gift-*habitus* and then back again? Let us take up each of these questions in turn.

Having been given the infused virtue-*habitus* and the gift-*habitus* at baptism, when the wayfarer acts, is she acting from one of these *habitus*, or both? Many commentators seem to think of the gifts as aiding the infused virtues, and that they grow together. The dominant viewpoint is that these two *habitus* operate simultaneously.

But the view that the wayfarer acts from both a virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* simultaneously is problematic. Strictly speaking, a person cannot act by two *habitus* simultaneously. With an infused virtue of, say, courage, God's grace functions to help the wayfarer better see and will to do the courageous act. With the gift of courage, the wayfarer puts aside her own limited reason and will and becomes receptive to the sweet and impeccable instinct of the Holy Spirit. When Aquinas compares the modes of virtue and gift activity, he does *not* say that those who are moved by the Holy Spirit's gifts are given "super-charged" reasoning and willing. He says that wayfarers moved by the instinct of the Holy Spirit do *not* act according to their discursive reason. Since there is clear incompatibility between a virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* as sources of the wayfarer's movement, it would seem to follow that the wayfarer does not act according to a virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* simultaneously.

Furthermore, if acting according to the gifts is a superior form of movement, then, if the wayfarer can act fully receptively to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, acting according to the infused virtues becomes superfluous.

Or worse, at a certain point of spiritual maturity, acting according to a virtue-*habitus* may hold back the wayfarer from progressing in perfection towards full unity with God.

So I conclude that, while the wayfarer possesses both infused virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus*, she acts only according to one of these *habitus* at any one time. So, does the wayfarer initially act exclusively according to one *habitus* and then change to the other permanently? Or does the wayfarer continually go back and forth between these two *habitus*?

As we saw in the previous section, Aquinas gives us guidelines to think through this question. First, the theological virtues precede the gifts in order of generation (i.e., in order of temporal priority). This makes sense because, for Aquinas, a criterion for the authenticity of the gifts is that they are in conformity with and further perfect the acts that arise from the theological and other infused virtues. So, in the same way that acts of faith are prior to acts of charity in terms of generation, so are the acts of the theological virtues prior to the acts of the gifts in generation.⁷²

However, once the wayfarer has sufficiently perfected acts of the theological virtues, will the wayfarer suddenly begin to act exclusively in response to the gifts, and no longer according to the theological virtues? Are virtue-*habitus* and gift-*habitus* so incompatible that we must think of the wayfarer as acting according to the human mode through acts of virtue up to a certain point in moral and spiritual development, and from then on according to a “superhuman” mode through spiritual instinct and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This strict incompatibilist view does not seem to make sense for four reasons. First, Thomas never speaks in this way, as if any wayfarer ceases to act virtuously. Second, it makes little or no sense psychologically, with regard to our experience of how human beings act. Third, it seems out of character with Aquinas’s gradualist account of moral and spiritual growth and change. Fourth, it would entail that wayfarers who do not progress very far in terms of perfection would never act from a gift-*habitus*, having not gotten to a level of virtue necessary to be able to authentically act in that way.

Having eliminated other viewpoints, the one that remains which makes the most sense is that the infused virtues and the gifts operate serially in the

⁷² Aquinas regularly contrasts the order of generation with the order of perfection. (e.g.: *ST* I, q. 85, a. 3; I-II, q. 62, a. 4; q. 68, a. 8, ad 2). For example, within the theological virtues themselves, faith is first in the order of generation, but charity is first in the order of perfection. Similarly between the theological virtues and the gifts, acts of the theological virtues are first in order of generation, but the act of the gifts are first in order of perfection.

life of the wayfarer, that both operate, but only one at a time. Furthermore, since virtue-*habitus* are first in order of generation, they predominate at first. But since the gift-*habitus* are first in the order of perfection, as the wayfarer grows in perfection, the gift-*habitus* will gradually come to predominate. Thus, I posit that the wayfarer, as she grows in moral and spiritual maturity, acts according to a virtue-*habitus* and a gift-*habitus* in a roughly inverse relationship. As the wayfarer acts increasingly in receptivity to the Spirit's gifts, she acts progressively less from a virtue-*habitus*. Aquinas writes in his *Commentary on John's Gospel* that, as one begins to act according to gift-*habitus* given at baptism, the Holy Spirit gifts the wayfarer additionally, enabling the wayfarer to increasingly act according to a gift-*habitus*:

We should say that it is characteristic of the gifts of God that, if one makes good use of a gift granted to him, he deserves to receive a greater gift and grace. . . . No one can love God unless he has the Holy Spirit: because we do not act before we receive God's grace, rather, the grace comes first: "he loved us first" (1 John 4:10). We should say, therefore, that the apostles first received the Holy Spirit so that they could love God and obey his commands. But it was necessary that they make good use, by their love and obedience, of this first gift of the Holy Spirit in order to receive the Spirit more fully. And so the meaning is, "if you love me," by means of the Holy Spirit, whom you have, and obey my commandments, you will receive the Holy Spirit with greater fullness.⁷³

For example, Aquinas contrasts wisdom as a virtue-*habitus* with wisdom as a gift-*habitus*. Whereas the wisdom that is a virtue makes judgments regarding divine things "from the investigation of reason," the wisdom that is a gift-*habitus* provides right judgment about divine things according to a "certain connaturality" with divine things.⁷⁴ Now, that is not a call for irrationality, but a recognition that acting according to spiritual instinct is the reception of the Holy Spirit's *intellectus*, where the wayfarer immediately and impeccably discerns the most fitting moral and spiritual response in

⁷³ Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 14, lec. 4, Marietti no. 1909 (aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan.C14.L4.n1909).

⁷⁴ *ST II-II*, q. 45, a. 2. Kieran Conley argues for the centrality of "affective knowledge" in the supernatural order, and further that affective knowledge in the supernatural order is always gift knowledge, that it is not present in the theological virtues (*A Theology of Wisdom* [Dubuque, IA: Priory, 1963], 117–19).

situations that are faced.⁷⁵ As the spiritual instinct of the Holy Spirit grows in the wayfarer, her need for the use of the discursive reasoning inherent in virtue-*habitus* concomitantly diminishes.

*The Nature of the Motion: Why Gift-Motion is More Perfect
than (Even) Infused Virtue-Motion*

We now return to the comparison of gift-motion with virtue-motion, which was briefly mentioned previously. I will now argue in more detail that the wayfarer who acts from a gift-*habitus* is able to perform acts of charity that are both superior to and more consistently good than what is possible when the wayfarer acts according to a virtue-*habitus*.

In *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1, Aquinas's analysis begins with his assertion that the degree of perfection of actions is proportionate to the perfection of the "mover."⁷⁶ The two "movers" Aquinas is referring to are reason and spiritual instinct. He continues that "the more exalted the mover, . . . the more perfect must be the *habitus* whereby the one moved is made proportionate to the mover." Aquinas's point here is clearly that a gift-*habitus* is superior to a virtue-*habitus* by virtue of its mover.

Some contemporary accounts of the infused virtues challenge the account given here, arguing that, in question 68, Aquinas is only distinguishing the gifts from the acquired virtues, or perhaps the acquired virtues from the infused moral virtues. These commentators take Aquinas's definition that "God works in us without us" to mean that reason is not at the heart of the infused virtues. However, Aquinas is clear that the complete definition of virtue applies to the theological and other infused virtues, and part of the definition of any virtue is that the fundamental "mover" is reason.⁷⁷

More fundamentally, the whole point of article 1 is to find a criterion which is true of all the gifts and not true of any of the virtues.⁷⁸ If Aquinas were merely distinguishing the gifts from the acquired virtues, or the acquired virtues and the infused moral virtues, why would he go to so much trouble to critique the dominant patristic and Scholastic texts which *are* trying to distinguish between the gifts and the theological virtues? In the

⁷⁵ This point could be further specified by distinguishing acting according to infused prudence and acting according to the gift of counsel.

⁷⁶ "Whatever is moved must be proportionate to its mover" (*ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1).

⁷⁷ Part of Aquinas's definition of a virtue is that it is "a quality of the mind." See also footnote 11.

⁷⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1: "They have not assigned a suitable reason for this distinction, a reason, to wit, which would apply either to all the virtues, and to none of the gifts, or vice versa."

first two articles of question 68, he makes his distinction between the gifts and the (theological) virtues in four different places.

First, Aquinas contrasts the seven virtues (i.e., including the theological virtues) with the seven gifts in terms of how they function as responses to vice.⁷⁹ He says that “to the extent the vices are *contrary to the good of reason* [*bonum rationis*], they are *contrary to the virtues*.” Whereas “to the extent that they are *contrary to divine instinct*, they are *contrary to the gifts*.”⁸⁰ He completes the response by saying that “the same thing [vice] is contrary to both God and reason.” He clearly and repeatedly associates a theological virtue-*habitus* with reason, and a gift-*habitus* with divine instinct.

Second, in responding to another objection that the virtues cannot be distinguished from the gifts, Aquinas again explains the distinction. On the one hand, virtue “must be understood to concern that rectitude of life which accords with the rule of reason.” On the other hand, a gift is “distinguished from an infused virtue, in that a gift is given by God in relation to God’s motion, which makes a person follow her instinct in the right way.”⁸¹

Third, in discussing the limitations of the theological virtues, Aquinas says that, “in matters directed to the supernatural end, *to which man’s reason moves him*, . . . informed by the theological virtues, *the motion of reason does not suffice*.”⁸² Here again Aquinas emphasizes that the fundamental principle of motion of all virtues, including the theological, is reason.⁸³

Fourth, just to make sure the reader is clear, Aquinas says that the wayfarer’s

reason is perfected by God in two ways: first, with its natural perfection, to wit, the natural light of reason; second, with a supernatural perfection, to wit, the theological virtues, as stated above [*ST* I-II, q. 62, a. 1]. Though this latter perfection is greater than the former,

⁷⁹ In *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1, ad 2 and ad 3.

⁸⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1, ad 2 (emphases added).

⁸¹ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1, ad 3: “Potest dici id quod datur a Deo in ordine ad motionem ipsius; quod scilicet facit hominem bene sequentem suos instinctus.”

⁸² *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2: “Sed in ordine ad finem ultimum supernaturalem, ad quem ratio movet secundum quod est aliquantulum et imperfecte formata per virtutes theologicas, non sufficit ipsa motio rationis.”

⁸³ Note that the context of this article is the necessity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for salvation. Aquinas’s main point in this article is that the wayfarer cannot be adequately guided to salvation by the virtues, and this inadequacy includes the theological and other infused virtues. It is because of the inherent inadequacy of all the virtues without the gifts that Aquinas concludes that the wayfarer also needs the gifts of the Holy Spirit to attain salvation.

yet the former is possessed in a more perfect manner than the latter: because [the wayfarer has the natural light of reason in her] full possession, whereas [she possesses the theological virtues] imperfectly, since we love and know God imperfectly.⁸⁴

For the fourth time in two articles, Aquinas makes the same two points. First, human reason is a definitive characteristic of all virtues. Second, without the gifts, the wayfarer's moral and spiritual growth will be stunted, and in two ways. Without the aid of the gifts in the most basic way, human reason, even with the help of the theological virtues, is inadequate to guide the wayfarer to salvation. This is not possible, Aquinas says, unless "the instinct and motion of the Holy Spirit descend from above."⁸⁵ The connotation here is of the Holy Spirit as "superhero," who comes to rescue us, so to speak.

Here Aquinas has repeatedly emphasized the fundamental distinction between the infused virtues and the gifts—they differ in terms of their moving principle. The moving principle of all virtues is reason. The moving principle of the gifts is divine instinct. Thus he concludes:

[For] those who are moved by divine instinct, there is no need to take counsel according to human reason, but only to follow their inner instinct, since they are moved by a principle higher than human reason. This then is what some say, that the gifts perfect man for acts which are higher than acts of virtue."⁸⁶

There is a second key distinction between how one is guided by a virtue-*habitus* and by a gift-*habitus* that has been operative throughout the paper, but is worth returning to now in making a fuller comparison between the gifts and virtues than has so far been made. An infused virtue gives the wayfarer guidance from the Holy Spirit, but one has to then use one's reason and discernment to make proper use of it. However, the gifts

⁸⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2: "Ratio autem hominis est perfecta dupliciter a Deo, primo quidem, naturali perfectione, scilicet secundum lumen naturale rationis; alio modo, quadam supernaturali perfectione, per virtutes theologicas, ut dictum est supra. Et quamvis haec secunda perfectio sit maior quam prima, tamen prima perfectiori modo habetur ab homine quam secunda, nam prima habetur ab homine quasi plena possessio, secunda autem habetur quasi imperfecta; imperfecte enim diligimus et cognoscimus Deum."

⁸⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2: "Nisi desuper adsit instinctus et motio spiritus sancti."

⁸⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 1: "Quod his qui moventur per instinctum divinum, non expedit consiliari secundum rationem humanam, sed quod sequantur interiorem instinctum, quia moventur a meliori principio quam sit ratio humana. Et hoc est quod quidam dicunt, quod dona perficiunt hominem ad altiores actus quam sint actus virtutum."

give the wayfarer spiritual instinct, to which the wayfarer has not so much to act as to be adequately receptive to the Spirit's guidance. We might think of the following analogical example to distinguish how the Holy Spirit works through the virtues and the gifts. In this example, one needs to find one's way over a treacherous mountain in blizzard-like winter conditions. One may receive all kinds of maps and suggestions and tips on how to find the one safe path to the other side. While that is certainly helpful, one can still expect to run into trouble. Alternatively, an expert guide shows up and offers to take you by the hand, guiding you through every twist and turn. One only has to be receptive to that guidance, which is in itself a choice.⁸⁷

An additional and very important indication—perhaps the best indication—that the acts of the gifts are superior to the acts of the virtues is what Aquinas says about the beatitudes. Aquinas notes that the beatitudes are actions, and the most perfect actions possible. And Aquinas clearly states that the acts of the beatitudes are possible not by a virtue-*habitus*, but only by a gift-*habitus*.⁸⁸ Since the beatitudes are the most perfect actions of a wayfarer, so too are the gifts the most perfect *habitus* as those from which the acts of the beatitudes flow. In his discussion of the beatitudes, Aquinas systematically shows the superiority of acts flowing from a gift-*habitus* in comparison with acts flowing from a virtue-*habitus*.

First, in the affluence of external goods, . . . from which man is withdrawn by a virtue, so that he uses them in moderation, and by a gift, in a more excellent way, so that he despises them altogether. Hence the first beatitude is: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." . . . From following the irascible passions man is withdrawn by a virtue, so that they are kept within the bounds appointed by the ruling of reason—and by a gift, in a more excellent manner, so that man, according to God's will, is altogether undisturbed by them. Hence the second beatitude is: "Blessed are the meek." In man's relations with his neighbor, . . . by way of duty, . . . we are disposed by a virtue, so that we do not refuse to

⁸⁷ Torrell (as well as Sherwin) also uses the language of the Spirit taking us by the hand: "According to a formula that Thomas often repeats, the gifts are granted 'to help the virtues [*in adiutorium uirtutum*]' to attain their final goal, despite our timidities, lukewarmness, pettiness. Certainly nothing goes beyond faith or charity, but our reason, which hesitates and calculates, does not always allow them a free path. God then intervenes and takes us by the hand, so to speak, in order to make us advance more surely on his pathways" (*Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 2:214).

⁸⁸ *ST I-II*, q. 69, a. 1, ad 3: "[Among the beatitudes are included] . . . meekness . . . justice and mercy . . . though these might seem to be virtues, they are nevertheless ascribed to gifts."

do our duty to our neighbor, which pertains to justice, and by a gift, so that we do the same much more heartily . . . Hence the fourth beatitude is: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice." With regard to spontaneous favors, we are perfected by a virtue, so that we give where reason dictates we should give, such as to our friends or others united to us, . . . and by a gift, so that, through reverence for God, we consider only the needs of those on whom we bestow our gratuitous bounty. . . . Hence the fifth beatitude is: "Blessed are the merciful." (*ST I-II*, q. 69, a. 3)

Discursive Reason versus Intellectus

As alluded to above, while Aquinas is saying that those who are moved by divine instinct do not need to follow human reason, he is not advocating irrationality. Rather, he is contrasting following human knowing with following divine and/or angelic knowing.⁸⁹ Whereas human knowing is discursive,⁹⁰ divine and angelic knowledge is intellective. Knowledge is discursive when one has to reason how to get from various first principles to the knowledge that comes from them. Knowledge is intellective, as it is for the Holy Spirit and the angels, when all that follows from first principles is immediately apprehended. As Aquinas puts it, "human souls, which acquire knowledge of truth by the discursive method, are called *rational*; and this comes of the feebleness of their intellectual light." But the discursive method would *not* be necessary if humans, like the Holy Spirit and the angels, "possessed the fullness of intellectual light" (*ST I*, q. 58, a. 3).

When the wayfarer is moved primarily by the infused virtues, the wayfarer reasons about what to do, with all its inherent feebleness and imperfection. When the wayfarer is moved primarily by the spiritual instinct

⁸⁹ *ST I*, q. 79, a. 8: "To understand [*intelligere*] is simply to apprehend intelligible truth: and to reason [*ratiocinari*] is to advance from one thing understood [*intellecto*] to another, so as to know [*cognoscendum*] an intelligible truth. And therefore angels, who according to their nature, possess perfect knowledge of intelligible truth, have no need to advance from one thing to another, but apprehend the truth simply and without mental discussion [*discursu*], as Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* vii). But man arrives at the knowledge of intelligible truth by advancing from one thing to another; and therefore he is called rational. Reasoning, therefore, is compared to understanding, as movement is to rest, or acquisition to possession, of which one belongs to the perfect, the other to the imperfect."

⁹⁰ *ST I*, q. 58, a. 3: "[Human] intellects obtain their perfection in the knowledge of truth by a kind of movement and discursive intellectual operation; in other words, as they advance from one known thing to another."

that is the motion of the gifts, the wayfarer is directed by the Holy Spirit to the good immediately and perfectly. In conclusion, to act according to the instinct of the Holy Spirit is to act more “intelligently” than to act according to human discursive reasoning. So, while spiritual instinct is a *habitus*, since it does not involve discursive reason, it is not, per se, a virtue.⁹¹

Salvation Perfection versus Complete Perfection

While I am arguing that acts done primarily in response to the instinct of the Holy Spirit are of a more perfect kind of act than those performed according to the infused virtues, a further clarification is helpful to avoid a potential misunderstanding. Aquinas says: “The gifts surpass the ordinary perfection of the virtues, not so much as to the kind of activities (in the manner that the counsels surpass the commandments), but as regards the manner of action.”⁹² It would be natural to conclude from this that the gifts do not allow the wayfarer to do acts more perfect than those that can be accomplished by the infused virtues. Rather, the interior instinct of the Holy Spirit merely allows the wayfarer to perform virtuous acts more consistently.

To grasp Aquinas's point, one must carefully understand the objection to which Aquinas is responding in this statement from *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 1. The objection claims that the gifts are *not* necessary for salvation. What is the basis for that objection? Since the gifts assist the wayfarer to perform the most perfect acts, and since such acts of perfection are not required for salvation, they are thus not necessary for salvation.

In response to the objection, Aquinas asserts that the gifts are indeed necessary for salvation. This is because the gifts are necessary not only for living out the counsels (or, e.g., the beatitudes), but also so that the wayfarer can readily obey the commandments. However, in emphasizing the necessity of the gifts in order to obey the commandments consistently, Aquinas is not thereby denying the necessity of the gifts in order to act according to the counsels. Acting according to a gift-*habitus* also enables the wayfarer

⁹¹ The lack of discursive reasoning is not unique to acts according to spiritual instinct. Contemplation is a form of *intellectus* that does not involve ratiocination. Both of these forms of intellect provide a foretaste of heavenly contemplation.

⁹² *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 1. When Aquinas refers to the “ordinary perfection” of the virtues, he may well be referring to a distinction more common in his earlier work, but which still appears in places in the *ST*, the distinction between “ordinary” and “heroic” virtue. Klooster argues that Aquinas's early distinction, following Aristotle, between ordinary and heroic virtue, gets replaced in Aquinas's later writings by the distinction between the virtues and the gifts. On this evolution in Aquinas's thought, see Anton ten Klooster, *Thomas Aquinas on the Beatitudes: Reading Matthew, Disputing Grace and Virtue, Preaching Happiness* (Louvain: Peeters, 2018), esp. 133–40.

to do more perfect acts than are possible by acting primarily according to a virtue-*habitus*.

So Aquinas holds two claims simultaneously. On the one hand, the gifts are necessary for salvation. That is, the wayfarer must possess them as a *habitus* in order to readily obey the commandments, even if the wayfarer is not adept in acting according to the gifts. On the other hand, when the wayfarer acts according to a gift-*habitus*—what Thomas refers to as acting according to the instinct of the Holy Spirit—the wayfarer is capable of acts superior to those done by a virtue-*habitus* such as faith, charity, or infused justice, which function according to infused reason.

The Superior Mode of Action and Act-Description for the Virtues and Gifts

The superior manner of action of the gifts (i.e., spiritual instinct) is what enables the wayfarer to do more perfect acts. So, for example, the wayfarer can do more perfect acts of faith and charity when they are perfected by the gifts of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. When such acts are performed, they arise from (at least predominantly) a gift-*habitus*. One might call an act of faith perfected by a gift-*habitus* either an “act of understanding” or an “act of faith with understanding.” What one can no longer properly call this “act of faith with understanding” is an act of the virtue of faith. For it not actualized by the power of the virtue of faith, but by the greater power of the gift of understanding. Similarly, an act of charity that is perfected by the gift of wisdom remains an act of charity, but it is now properly seen as an act of charity according to the gift of wisdom, because the wayfarer can perform such an act of charity only because she is acting (at least predominantly) according to a gift-*habitus*.⁹³

Conclusion

Having established the key points regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit set out in the introduction, there remain only a few final points. First, this paper is by no means a treatment even of all the essential topics for understanding Aquinas’s views on the gifts. A comprehensive treatment would need to address his treatment of law, especially the New Law, his account of grace more generally, and how his account of the gifts is an expression of the missions of the Son and Spirit, especially the Holy Spirit as Love and Gift. It would also address aspects of Aquinas’s Christology, such as the

⁹³ They are thus of a different kind from acts done predominantly by an infused virtue-*habitus* either of faith or of charity.

mission of the Son, the descent of the Spirit on Christ at his baptism, and the significance of spiritual instinct for understanding Christ's full humanity. In addition, it would take up how each of the gifts function in the moral and spiritual life; how each perfect their associated virtues so that the wayfarer can perform acts of charity more consistently and perfectly than would otherwise be possible.

Second, to again summarize the various arguments of this paper, I have argued three central claims, as well as working out some of the implications of these three claims. First, being moved by spiritual instinct is necessarily superior to being moved by one's discursive reason. Second, only the gifts can enable acts of the highest degree of perfection. Third, the gifts allow the wayfarer to avoid sin in a way not possible if the wayfarer acts only according to a virtue-*habitus*.

Returning to the introduction, the arguments of this paper are intended not only to provide a more fulsome account of Aquinas's view of the moral life, but also to move towards a Thomistic ethics that, in more clearly delineating the function of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the wayfarer's life, better integrates the moral and spiritual life. Unfortunately, the assumption that the moral and spiritual life can and should remain separate (dominant from Trent to the Second Vatican Council), even if not explicitly stated, continues to be embodied in most of the current literature in Thomistic ethics.

Because of God's great love, wayfarers are gifted with a spiritual instinct. As Aquinas says, God unfailingly guides non-human creatures to their ultimate end through the natural instinct they have been given by God. As he puts it, these non-human creatures are moved to their end connaturally. Since God's love for human persons is certainly no less than God's love for other creatures, how could God then give human beings less sure guidance to their ultimate end? For Aquinas, since human beings are creatures of choice and virtue and have a supernatural end, the natural instinct which God places in human beings is obviously inadequate to bring human beings securely to their final spiritual end. They need another power from God. And this is the power of spiritual instinct, whereby God brings human beings to the ultimate end as surely and sweetly as is providentially provided for all of God's other creatures. Thus Aquinas also speaks of the gifts as guiding wayfarers connaturally, rather than by the investigation of reason.⁹⁴ Aquinas's doctrine

⁹⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 2. This also brings us Aquinas's analogy between the acquired moral virtues and the gifts in *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 3, where he makes three comparisons: "[1] The gifts of the Holy Spirit are human perfections by which one is disposed to rightly follow the instinct of the Holy Spirit. The moral virtues perfect the appetitive power after it participates in reason, that is, insofar as it has been formed and moved by reason's

of spiritual instinct is not only true to his account of the moral and spiritual life; it is also another way in which Aquinas communicates God's great love for us, and how God assures wayfarers that they have been provided with all they could possibly need to bring their journey to a successful end, of full and complete friendship with God. And that is the greatest of all possible love stories.⁹⁵ N.V

command. [2] So, the way in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit possess a human being in relation to the Holy Spirit, is as the moral virtues possess the appetitive power in relation to reason. [3] Moreover, the moral virtues are *habitus*, whereby one's appetitive power is disposed to readily obey reason. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also *habitus*, whereby a person is perfected to readily obey the Holy Spirit." And so, (1) in the way the moral virtues perfect *a person's appetites* through exercising reason, so also the gifts of the Holy Spirit perfect the whole person by a spiritual instinct. (2) In the way that, through reason, the moral virtues control the person's appetites, so too through the Holy Spirit the gifts control the whole person. (3) Both the moral virtues and gifts are *habitus*, one perfecting obedience to reason, the other perfecting obedience to the Holy Spirit. What Aquinas does not specifically add here is how the acquired virtues and the gifts are both different from the infused virtues. As noted earlier, the infused virtues are inherently imperfect to their supernatural task. On the other hand, as the acquired virtues can fully perfect a person towards their natural end, because reason as mover is connatural to the natural end, so too the gifts can fully perfect a person towards their supernatural end, because the Holy Spirit as mover is connatural to the supernatural end.

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