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Aquinas on Humility: Evidencing Man's Relation to God

A THESIS

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To the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Humble Handmaid of the Lord,  
and to St. Joseph,  
Humble Worker

Magnificat anima mea Dominum: et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo. Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae: ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes, quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est: et sanctum nomen ejus, et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies timentibus eum. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo: dispersit superbos mente cordis sui. Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles. Esurientes implevit bonis: et divites dimisit inanes. Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae: sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in saecula.

Luke 1:49-55.

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*TABLE OF CONTENTS*

---

<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Humility as a Special Virtue</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1. The Matter and the Form of Humility .....	7
i. The Matter of Humilty .....	8
ii. The Form of Humility.....	12
2. The Foundation of Humility in Knowledge .....	16
i. The Rule of Humility .....	16
ii. The Two Terms of the Rule .....	18
3. Humility in Relation to Neighbor .....	21
i. Self-Abasement Before Neighbor .....	22
ii. Humility and Justice .....	25
4. Humility as a Part of Temperance and Modesty.....	28
i. Humility as a Moral Virtue and as a Potential Part of Temperance. .	30
ii. Humility as a Potential Part of Temperance and of Modesty.....	32
5. The Rank of Humility Among the Virtues .....	35
i. The Rank According to the Ordinance of Reason .....	36
ii. The Foundation of the Spiritual Life.....	38
<b>Chapter Two: Humility and Magnanimity as Paired Virtues (Duplex Virtus)</b>	
<b>Concerning the Arduous Good (Bonum Arduum)</b> .....	<b>40</b>
1. Aristotle on Magnanimity and His Reticence on Humility .....	41

i.	Aristotle’s Characterization of the Magnanimous Man . . . . .	41
ii.	Two Tensions in the Account of the Magnanimous Man . . . . .	44
a.	His Seemingly Vicious Characteristics . . . . .	44
b.	His Incompatibility with Humility . . . . .	46
2.	St. Thomas’s Transposition of Magnanimity . . . . .	47
i.	St. Thomas’s Placement of Magnanimity Among the Parts of Fortitude . . . . .	47
ii.	St. Thomas’s Formulation of the Magnanimous Man . . . . .	50
iii.	St. Thomas’s Reading of Aristotle on Humility . . . . .	54
3.	The Complementarity of Humility and Magnanimity . . . . .	57
i.	Resolution of Apparent Contradictions in the Virtues’ Characteristics . . . . .	58
ii.	The Unity of the Virtues in the Reasonable Pursuit of Superiority and Man’s Perfection . . . . .	61
iii.	Distinction in Action of the Virtues in the Pursuit of Man’s Perfection . . . . .	64
	<b>Chapter Three: Humility as an Acquired and as an Infused Virtue . . . . .</b>	<b>67</b>
1.	St. Thomas’s Distinction between the Acquired and the Infused Virtues . . . . .	68
i.	St. Thomas’s Account of the Acquired Virtues and of the Infused Virtues . . . . .	68
ii.	Two Central Claims about the Distinction between the Acquired and the Infused Virtues . . . . .	71
2.	The Case for an Acquired Virtue of Humility . . . . .	74

i.	Why the Case Must Be Made . . . . .	74
ii.	Man’s Natural End . . . . .	77
3.	The Distinction between the Acquired and the Infused Virtues of Humility . . .	78
i.	The Reverence for God from which the Acquired and the Infused Virtues of Humility Grow . . . . .	79
ii.	The Rule Guiding the Acts of the Acquired Virtue and the Acts of the Infused Virtue of Humility . . . . .	81
iii.	The Mean of the Acquired and of the Infused Virtues of Humility . . . . .	88
	<b>Conclusion . . . . .</b>	<b>91</b>
	<b>Appendix . . . . .</b>	<b>97</b>
	<b>Bibliography . . . . .</b>	<b>98</b>

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## *ABBREVIATIONS*

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DQVC	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus Cardinalibus</i>
DQVComm	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus in Communi</i>
Leon.	Leonine Edition of <i>Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris</i> <i>Angelici Opera Omnia</i>
NE	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
SCG	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>
Sent.	<i>Scriptum Super Sententiis</i>
SEM	<i>Super Evangelium S. Matthaei Lectura</i>
SLE	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>

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## *INTRODUCTION*

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Definitions and characterizations of humility are abundant in literature, essays, and scholarly works, and yet the paradox that Christ teaches us by his preaching and his own life that “he who humbles himself will be exalted” remains an enigma.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the virtue of humility often evades the mind’s grasp, and the concept of humility slips into a delineation of unseemly characteristics, such as self-disparagement, inferiority complexes, and dejected self-abasement, which are more indicative of vice than virtue. Among the virtues, nonetheless, the virtue of humility is one of the most beautiful, attractive and central to human excellence, a virtue that St. Thomas likens to “the foundation which is first laid in a building.”<sup>2</sup> Humility embodies all of human virtue insofar as it “is the precondition and basic presupposition for the genuineness, the beauty and the truth of all virtue. It is mater and caput (mother and fountain-head) of all specifically human virtues.”<sup>3</sup> This is because it expels pride, the main obstacle to human greatness and the chief impediment to man’s reception of God’s grace.<sup>4</sup>

So what is the essence of this mysterious virtue, which, by the conquest of pride, frees man to pursue all the other virtues? This thesis aims at characterizing the nature of the virtue of humility. In particular, it is an attempt to show the richness of St. Thomas’s account of this

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 23:12, Lk. 14:11, Lk. 18:14.

<sup>2</sup> “Sicut ordinata virtutum congregatio per quantum similitudinem aedificio comparatur, ita etiam illud quod est primum in acquisitione virtutum, fundamento comparatur, quod primum in aedificio iacitur.” St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Summa Theologiae* (=ST) II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad. 2, vol. 10, p. 301 (=Leon. 10:301) *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed. (Rome, 1889-99). All translations of the *Summa Theologiae* are my own unless otherwise noted. In translating the *Summa Theologiae*, however, I have also consulted the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Von Hildebrand, “Humility” in *Transformation in Christ: On the Christian Attitude of Mind* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), 121.

<sup>4</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5 ad. 2 (Leon. 10:301).

virtue. To make this attempt, I will focus principally upon his question on humility found in the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, since this is his chief account of humility as a special virtue.<sup>5</sup> I will also occasionally refer to his treatment of this virtue in his other works. Though he devotes only one question to humility in his *Summa Theologiae*, the context of its placement within the whole and his careful delineation of its form and matter as a special virtue that inheres within the irascible appetite manifest the nature of humility with a splendid clarity.

I will begin by attempting to describe how St. Thomas treats of humility as a special virtue with a specific matter and form in Chapter One. While many other accounts of humility fix upon the accidental and secondary characteristics of humility, St. Thomas moves with remarkable ease and simplicity to the essence of this virtue. His systematic presentation of virtue in general aids his presentation of humility in the second part of the *Summa Theologiae*, which gives humility a context and a place among the virtues, as well as a specific operation to fulfill within the soul of man. According to St. Thomas, a virtue is a habit of the soul by which a man does the good, that is, lives righteously.<sup>6</sup> Each moral virtue he specifies by its particular matter and form, including humility. He also carefully organizes each special virtue under the four cardinal virtues according to its mode. One of St. Thomas's contributions to the doctrine of the cardinal virtues is the understanding that each of the four cardinal virtues, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, taken in a general or broad sense, contribute the "different formal aspects" (*rationes formales*) which inform every special virtue.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, each special

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<sup>5</sup> St. Thomas treated the nature of the cardinal virtues in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1252-56) and also in his *Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues* (1268-71); however, it was not until the *Summa Theologiae* II-II (1271-73) that he presented "a systematic and thorough presentation of the whole range of specific virtues and vices set out under the structure of the four cardinal virtues." See R. E. Houser, introduction to *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert, and Philip the Chancellor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies 2004), 64.

<sup>6</sup> See ST I-II, q. 55 (Leon. 6:349-54).

<sup>7</sup> See ST I-II, q. 61, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 6:394); a. 3, c. (Leon. 6:395). See also Houser, 67, where he explains that, according to St. Thomas, every specific virtue exists according to a set of four general characteristics which are necessary for virtue itself: "prudence in the broad sense refers to 'all rational direction' of human action; justice

virtue is also specifically allied to a particular cardinal virtue insofar as it follows the mode of that cardinal virtue. Thus, as I shall discuss in Chapter One, St. Thomas places humility under temperance, insofar as it is characterized by the “generic, formal trait of ‘moderation’” in its particular matter, just as temperance moderates the concupiscible appetite in its desire for food, drink, and sexual pleasure.<sup>8</sup> Other matters discussed in Chapter One include the particular rule of reason which humility follows, the role of humility in the relations of man with his neighbors, and the rank of humility among the virtues.

Next, in Chapter Two, I will endeavor to show how humility and magnanimity are paired virtues in St. Thomas’s schema. He allies these two virtues as complementary or paired, calling them *duplex virtus*, suggesting that each grows in proportion to the other in the human soul.<sup>9</sup> Although other opposite motions of the appetite are moderated by only one moral virtue, St. Thomas enumerates these two virtues to order the opposing passions, hope and despair, in man’s irascible appetite for what is great. This is a surprising and novel alliance given the central place of magnanimity as “crown of the virtues” in Aristotle’s treatment, and his modest treatment of humility, which he mentions only in passing. While dissolving some of the apparent tensions of the Philosopher’s account, I also show the due regard that St. Thomas gives Aristotle’s account when writing his own formulation of the virtue of magnanimity, pairing it to the virtue of humility. In this discussion, I hope to clarify further the virtue of humility as it is distinct from, yet complementary, to magnanimity in moderating the passion of hope.

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includes ‘all correctness producing equity among human actions;’ temperance extends to ‘*all* moderation restraining human appetites from worldly goods;’ and courage incorporates ‘*all* resoluteness of mind steadying a human in the good and against the assaults of all sorts of evils.’”

<sup>8</sup> Houser, 79.

<sup>9</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:292-93).

Finally, an essential component of St. Thomas's teaching on the virtues is his distinction between the acquired moral virtues and the infused moral virtues. While both acquired and infused virtues are habits of the soul, acquired virtues are engendered by repeated human acts while infused virtues are caused by God's action alone.<sup>10</sup> Further, each disposes the soul to act according to a different rule: acquired virtues follow the dictate of reason alone, while infused virtues follow the dictate of reason enlightened by faith.<sup>11</sup> Thus, by acquired virtues, man acts toward his natural fulfillment, while, by infused virtues, he acts toward his supernatural fulfillment. When discussing the virtue of humility, St. Thomas is never explicit about whether or not an acquired virtue of humility exists in addition to an infused virtue of humility, let alone what the specifying features of each might be. Given his distinction between acquired and infused virtues in the *Summa Theologiae* as well as in his other works, however, and on the basis of a careful reading of his question on humility, I will attempt to argue for the existence of both an acquired virtue and an infused virtue of humility as well as to characterize these two virtues.

Throughout this thesis, I return often to a central component of St. Thomas's formulation of these virtues of humility: man's reverence for God.<sup>12</sup> This is the formal motive from which both the acquired and the infused virtues of humility spring, and it separates his definition from certain secular attempts to define humility without reference to God.<sup>13</sup> In fact, in his view, the rule of reason that guides humility's formation firstly requires the recognition of two terms: man and God. Secondly, this rule requires that the humble man then evidence the relation of these

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<sup>10</sup> See ST I-II, q. 63 (Leon. 6:406-11).

<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, q. 63, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:410-11).

<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas is clear about humility's formal motive of reverence for God in almost every article: ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad. 5; a. 2, ad. 3; a. 3, c. and ad. 1; a. 4, ad. 1; a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:292-308). Though he does not explicitly mention the formal motive in article five when he is discussing the rank of humility among the virtues, he does dwell here in his responses to objections two, three and four on the necessity of humility for removing the obstacle of pride as the foundation of man's spiritual life and reception of the grace of God in its growth, thus, highlighting again, man's relation to God as a particular aim of humility.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, q. 161, a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:307).

two terms, of man, the creature, to God, his Creator. Both the acquired virtue of humility and the infused virtue of humility are conditioned by man's evidencing this relation between himself and God, the former as enlightened by simply by reason alone and the latter as enlightened by reason and faith. Insofar as man recognizes that he is nothing of himself and worthy of nothing, that all good gifts he has have their origin in God alone and not in himself, and that God is infinitely great and worthy of all honor and love—insofar as he recognizes these truths, he is able, out of reverence for God, to moderate his desire for superiority according to right reason. The truth of this relation of himself to God is the brilliant truth that the humble man *evidences* by his subjection to God out of reverence for Him.

The word “evidence” used as a verb takes on a special meaning in phenomenology. As Robert Sokolowski describes it, “evidencing” is “the bringing about of truth, the bringing forth of a presence. It is a performance and an achievement. Evidence is the activity of presenting an identity in a manifold, the articulation of a state of affairs, or the verification of a proposition. It is the achieving of truth.”<sup>14</sup> Although phenomenology and the scholasticism of St. Thomas approach philosophy from different vantage points, they are united in their “conviction that human reason is ordered to truth” and can “achieve truth through its own powers.”<sup>15</sup> Given this shared conviction, I have included this term in the title of this thesis to emphasize the fundamental relationship between the humble man and reality. Evidencing, taken in this sense, captures the phenomenon that man actively participates in the manifestation of the way things

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<sup>14</sup> Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160. For his definition of evidencing see 159-62.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-7. Sokolowski explains that medieval scholasticism begins with the Christian faith and deduces a possibility for philosophy, following St. Anselm. Scholasticism affirms that philosophy has its own function and domain that is not “absorbed by faith” (207). However, ancient philosophy as well as phenomenology do not proceed from such a theological justification as it is derived from within Christian faith. Phenomenology “takes philosophy simply as a human excellence” (*Ibid.*). Though both begin philosophy from different considerations, the scholasticism of St. Thomas and phenomenology are in no way contradictory. Sokolowski calls these two “entrances” into philosophy “complementary” (*Ibid.*).

are: “We *do* something when intelligible objects present themselves; we are not mere recipients. We are not only datives, but also nominatives of disclosure.”<sup>16</sup> So also, the humble man is able to disclose this fundamental truth as intelligible to others through his humble way of life, since he has “registered” the truth about himself in relation to God within his own understanding. This truth is brilliant insofar as it illumines man’s proper relation to all things.

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<sup>16</sup> Sokolowski, 161.

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## CHAPTER ONE: HUMILITY AS A SPECIAL VIRTUE

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### 1. The Matter and the Form of Humility

James Kellenberger observes that “different contemporary philosophical accounts of humility—efforts to define or to say what humility is—typically focus on some one characteristic of humility and offer it as a defining feature.”<sup>1</sup> Kellenberger suggests that because so many definitions are posited, each “capturing a truth” about humility, humility is a “polythetic concept.”<sup>2</sup> According to Kellenberger, a polythetic concept is “a class that is not defined by necessary and sufficient properties; instead, its members are marked by characteristics shared by many but not all instances.”<sup>3</sup> Kellenberger is correct to note that the whole class of humble men is marked by various characteristics, some of which are shared by many, but not all the men. This is true because each man is a limited, particular instantiation of the virtue of humility, who cannot exhibit all possible humble characteristics. Nonetheless, there must be properties that are “necessary and sufficient” to which we can point and say, “That is humility,” or the question of this thesis, What is the virtue of humility?, is incoherent.

Given that St. Thomas embeds his description of humility within a whole vision of the world expounded in the *Summa Theologiae*, his particular treatment of the essence of this virtue is buttressed by his well-articulated understanding of other notions such as habit, virtue, human nature, and God. St. Thomas employs these notions to articulate the essential nature of humility with a remarkable precision that does not mistake the secondary characteristics for those

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<sup>1</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 47 (2010): 323.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 324.

essential to its nature. In this chapter, I attempt to manifest St. Thomas's characterization of the nature of humility as a special virtue in the human soul. In Section 1, I will discuss the matter (Part i) and the form (Part ii) of the virtue of humility. In Section 2, I will consider the unique knowledge that is the foundation of humility. I will then examine how the virtue of humility affects man's relation to his fellow men (Section 3). In the final two sections, I will show how humility relates to other virtues, particularly insofar as it is a potential part of temperance and of modesty (Section 4), and, also, insofar as it ranks among the other virtues in importance (Section 5).

*i. The Matter of Humility*

St. Thomas presents the virtue of humility as a potential part of temperance and carefully differentiates it from other virtues falling under temperance by isolating its matter.<sup>4</sup> The matter of a virtue has two pertinent kinds. The first is the matter *in qua*, that is, the power of the soul "in which" the virtue is found, and this is the subject of the virtue.<sup>5</sup> St. Thomas places humility in the irascible appetite, the power of the soul "which faces good not as it is merely desirable, but as it is arduous and difficult of achievement."<sup>6</sup> Many habits exist within each part of the soul simultaneously, however, and thus a further kind of matter must be specified: the matter about which (*circa quam*) a virtue is concerned. There are two movements or passions belonging to the irascible appetite that are differentiated insofar as the "difficult good has something which attracts the appetite, namely the notion of good, and has something repelling the appetite, namely the difficulty of attaining it."<sup>7</sup> St. Thomas says that man is drawn toward the arduous good of

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<sup>4</sup> See Houser, 65.

<sup>5</sup> See ST I-II, q. 55, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:353).

<sup>6</sup> Sebastian Carlson, "The Virtue of Humility," *The Thomist* 7 (1944): 140. See also ST I, q. 81, a. 2 (Leon. 5:289).

<sup>7</sup> "Bonum arduum habet aliquid unde attrahit appetitum, scilicet ipsam rationem boni, et habet aliquid retrahens, scilicet ipsam difficultatem adipiscendi." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10: 292).

what is great (*magna*) by the passion of hope, and that he is repulsed from the difficulty of its attainment by the passion of despair.<sup>8</sup> Humility's *immediate* matter *circa quam* is the passion of hope, awakened by this arduous good, since humility *directly* shapes hope in accord with right reason.<sup>9</sup> The arduous good of great things (*magna*) is the *mediate* matter *circa quam* of humility, since this arduous good is an external object of desire, about which the virtue of humility acts *indirectly* by its direct shaping of the passion of hope.<sup>10</sup>

According to St. Thomas, magnanimity also shares with humility the same immediate and mediate matter *circa quam*. As Aristotle does, St. Thomas explains that the mediate concern of magnanimity is what is great which is difficult to attain, since "magnanimity from its name signifies a certain extension of the soul to great things," and, particularly, the highest external thing which comes into man's use, namely, honor, since it is awarded to the virtuous, to the best, and to God.<sup>11</sup> The immediate matter *circa quam* of magnanimity, then, is also the passion of hope, which has the highest of great things, namely, honor, as its object.<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas directly associates superiority (*excellencia*) and what is great (*magna*), saying that "because magnanimity

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<sup>8</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon.10:292-93). I will translate *magna* as "what is great" or as "great things" depending on the context.

<sup>9</sup> ST II-II q. 161, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>10</sup> I have chosen to translate *excellencia* as "superiority" rather than as "excellence." The Latin term denotes a certain "loftiness" or "height," as from (*ex*) the heavens (*caelum*). St. Thomas says that humility keeps a man from "tending inordinately to his own *excellencia*" (*in propriam excellenciam inordinate tendat*), ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:307). On the other hand, St. Thomas says that the magnanimous man ought to tend to *excellencia*, as is proportionate to him (see footnote 13 below). Now, for man to "limit" his desire for his own perfection or excellence seems to be contrary to the position of St. Thomas, who argues that man ought to strive untiringly for his proper perfection or excellence, according to the nature given to him by God. On the other hand, a particular man's superiority, namely, his relative position among others ought to be pursued according to what is commensurate to his God-given superiority, that is, according to his natural talents, personality, and vocation. Thus, I translate *excellencia* as "superiority" rather than "excellence," since the humble man is reasonable in restraining himself from pursuing *excellencia* and the magnanimous man is reasonable in encouraging this same pursuit; but both should strive, unceasingly, for his own excellence, and thus *excellencia* must denote "superiority" in these contexts rather than "excellence." I am grateful to Dr. Kevin White for pointing this out.

<sup>11</sup> ST II-II, q. 129, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:57). See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (=NE), bk. 2, ch. 8, l. 1107b.23.

<sup>12</sup> "Quod honor, etsi non sit passio vel operatio, est tamen alicuius passionis obiectum: scilicet spei, quae tendit in bonum arduum. Et ideo magnanimitas est quidem immediate circa passionem spei, mediate autem circa honorem, sicut circa obiectum spei." *Ibid.*, q. 129, a. 1, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:58).

tends to what is great (*magnorum*), consequently, [the magnanimous man] chiefly tends to those things which involve some superiority (*excellantiam*).”<sup>13</sup> Further, he says that the magnanimous man avoids those things that are “contrary to his superiority (*excellantiam*) or supremacy (*magnitudini*).”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the magnanimous man’s pursuit of what is great (*magna*) has the further effect of his superiority (*excellantia*), namely, that he is elevated high above other men.<sup>15</sup>

Magnanimity and humility both share the same immediate matter *circa quam*: the soul’s passion of hope. Though magnanimity and humility share the same mediate matter *circa quam* under the aspect of that which is arduous and great, St. Thomas makes a distinction between the scope of the mediate matter *circa quam* of humility and that of magnanimity. For the magnanimous man, the arduous good is highest of great things, that is, honor. However, according to St. Thomas, for the humble man, the arduous good is *all things*. While both share the same mediate matter *circa quam*, namely, the arduous good of what is great, those things which qualify as great and arduous from the perspective of the humble man include all good things, while those things which are great and arduous from the perspective of the magnanimous man are only the most superior of good things. St. Thomas discusses humility as regarding “what is great,” throughout the first four articles of the question on humility.<sup>16</sup> He then specifies the scope of humility’s mediate matter, however, in article five stating that “Humility makes man subject rightly and universally by the order of reason *in all things*, while every other virtue

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<sup>13</sup> “Quia magnanimus tendit ad magna, consequens est quod ad illa praecipue tendat quae important aliquam excellentiam.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:64).

<sup>14</sup> “Et ideo haec et similia vitat magnanimus secundum quendam specialem rationem, scilicet tanquam contraria excellentiae vel magnitudini.” (Ibid.).

<sup>15</sup> Since man’s attainment of great things (*magna*) is so associated to his superiority (*excellantia*), I will sometimes refer to the mediate matter *circa quam* as man’s desire or pursuit of “what is great” or as such of “superiority.”

<sup>16</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:292); ad. 3 (Leon. 10:293); a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:299). See also Carlson, 147.

subjects man according to a specific matter.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, there is nothing that is not matter for the virtue of humility in the life of man, regardless of whether it is apparently great or small.

At first, this expansion of humility’s mediate matter seems to be incompatible with St. Thomas’s determination of humility as a habit that regulates the irascible appetite, which aims only at those goods that are difficult to attain, not all good things. However, as Carlson points out, Cajetan clears up the apparent contradiction as follows:

Humility directly regards all things, whether arduous in themselves or not arduous in themselves, but all things under the aspect of something arduous. For what is not arduous in itself takes on the notion of the arduous for the humble person, because it takes on the notion of the divine: since the humble address themselves to all goods as to things that are God’s.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the immediate matter remains the soul’s natural inclination to seek what is great (the passion of hope) while the mediate matter is every good thing; since man is lowly, all good things are great to him, for all good things come from God. Further, Cajetan points out that, since man is inclined to make of all good things he has a source of pride, even down to the smallest of things, such as skill in cooking, humility is necessary to regulate and reprimand this inclination.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Ordinationi autem facit hominem bene subiectum humilitas in universali quantum *ad omnia*: quaelibet autem alia virtus quantum ad aliquam materiam specialem.” Ibid., q. 161, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:300), emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup> “Humilitas est directe respect omnium, scilicet arduorum secundum se et non se arduorum in se, sed tamen omnium est sub ratione ardui. Quia quae non sunt in se ardua, induunt rationem ardui. Quia quae non sunt in se ardua, induunt rationem ardui relate ad humilem, quia induunt rationem divini: ad omnia siquidem bona se habet humilis ut ad ea quae Dei sunt.” Thomas de Vio Cajetan, O.P., *Commentaria Cardinalis Caietani*, ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5: II, vol. 10, pg. 301 (=Leon. 10:301) of *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed. (Rome, 1882-). This translation of Cajetan’s text is from Carlson, 146.

<sup>19</sup> “Humilitatis vero in materia omnia bona sunt, sive secundum se sint magna, sive parva. Quoniam est circa quae est superbia: constat autem superbia esse et in excellentia minimorum, ut patet in mechanicis et mediocribus officiis, in quibus pessima superbia invenitur: sunt enim coqui superbi.” *Commentaria* on ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1: III (Leon. 10:294). See Carlson, 147.

ii. *The Form of Humility*

The above discussion of matter is not sufficient to define humility as a special virtue among the others since it has only characterized that in which and about which humility is concerned. Both the formal object and the formal motive remain to be distinguished in order to fully characterize humility.<sup>20</sup> The formal object is the precise purpose or end of the virtue, “that to which it is immediately ordained.”<sup>21</sup> The formal motive is the “special good which reason sees will be obtained” by the practice of a special virtue.<sup>22</sup>

First, the formal object of humility is to “temper and restrain the soul lest it tend immoderately toward superior things (*excelsa*).”<sup>23</sup> The chief purpose of humility is to rightly curb the soul’s desire for the lofty. However, Carlson explains that while St. Thomas insists on humility’s *repression* of hope as its foremost directive, this is *secondary* to the formal object of humility.<sup>24</sup> St. Thomas identifies the formal object of humility as the reasonable moderation of the immediate matter *circa quam*, namely, man’s desire for superiority: “Thus it is said that, properly speaking, humility directs and moderates the movement of the appetite.”<sup>25</sup> Since it is *essential* that humility *moderates* and *directs* the appetite, it is *secondary* that humility most often must restrain the desire for superiority. There exists the rare man in whom humility must strengthen him to pursue what is proportionate to his talents, but for most of us, “humility represses hope or confidence in the self more than it makes use of them.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the formal

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<sup>20</sup> See Carlson, 144-51.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 148. See also ST I-II, q. 54, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 6:343).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>23</sup> “Et ideo circa appetitum boni ardui necessaria est duplex virtus. Una quidem quae temperet et refrenet animum, ne immoderate tendat in excelsa: et hoc pertinent ad virtutem humilitatis. Alia vero quae firmat animum contra desperationem, et impellit ipsum ad prosecutionem magnorum secundum rationem rectam: et haec est magnanimitas. Et sic patet quod humilitas est quaedam virtus.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>24</sup> Carlson, 149-50.

<sup>25</sup> “Et ideo dicendum est quod humilitas proprie est moderativa motus appetitus.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:295).

<sup>26</sup> “Humilitas autem plus reprimat spem vel fiduciam de seipso quam ea utatur.” *Ibid.*, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:296).

object is essentially moderation of humility's matter, the irascible appetite's movements of hope, and only secondarily is humility's most principal act a repression of that desire.<sup>27</sup>

Magnanimity's formal object is also *essentially* the reasonable *moderation* of the passion of hope. Unlike humility, however, magnanimity *secondarily confirms* the desire for superiority. St. Thomas specifies this distinction between how the two virtues moderate the passion of hope:

Therefore, concerning the appetite for the arduous good, two virtues are necessary: one which tempers and restrains the soul from an immoderate desire for what is great, and this belongs to the virtue of humility; another which confirms the soul against despair, and impels it to pursue what is great following right reason, and this is magnanimity. Thus, it is clear that humility is a virtue.<sup>28</sup>

If both virtues *essentially moderate* man's desire for what is great and only *secondarily* restrain or confirm this desire, a further specification about what is essential is necessary in order to distinguish formally the two virtues.<sup>29</sup> Without a further formal characteristic, it would seem that humility is not a special virtue, but merely another term for the aspect of magnanimity that restrains man's desire for what is great according to right reason. However, St. Thomas clearly indicates in this passage that there are two virtues moderating the soul's appetite for superiority.

In order to clarify why St. Thomas posits that these two virtues, which moderate the same passion, are essentially distinct, he explains another formal aspect of these virtues, namely, the formal motive that is the reason (*ratio*) for the moderation of the passion. The formal motive clarifies the "reasonableness" of each virtue's particular moderation of the soul's tendency toward what is great and distinguishes them precisely by the special motive that each act according to. In article 2, objector 3 argues that one virtue suffices to moderate the excessive

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<sup>27</sup> See especially Carlson, footnote 37, p. 149-50. Humility finds a mean between the extremes of pride and a sort of undue servility, but, while St. Thomas devotes question 162 to a discussion of the vice of pride, he does not discuss the opposite extreme. This may be because of the exceptionally rare instances in which this vice manifests itself. Carlson notes Charles Dicken's notorious character, Uriah Heep, as an example of this atypical vice.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra* footnote 23.

<sup>29</sup> See Carlson, 140-41.

contrary motions of the appetite: “it pertains to the same virtue both to restrain excessive pursuit and to strengthen the soul against excessive withdrawal.”<sup>30</sup> For example, fortitude moderates excesses in *both* fear and daring. Fortitude usually encourages fear and restrains daring in accord with right reason; yet, in other instances, it may be necessary for fortitude to restrain daring and encourage reasonable fear in order to find the virtuous mean of action.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, magnanimity moderates excesses in both hope and despair, usually confirming hope, but in certain instances, suppressing it. The objector continues, “magnanimity strengthens the soul against the difficulties that arise in the pursuit of great things,” therefore, since humility moderates the appetite by restraint, “humility is not a distinct virtue from magnanimity.” Further, elsewhere in the *Summa* St. Thomas, with no mention of humility, states in a list of virtues about contrary motions around one appetite that magnanimity is about (*circa*) hope and despair.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it may seem that humility is merely another name for magnanimity’s restraint of the soul’s desire for great things.

In his response to this objection, St. Thomas explains the distinctive formal motives for humility and magnanimity. Firstly, St. Thomas points out that fortitude’s moderation of the excesses of both fear and daring is united by the same reason (*ratio*), namely, “that man ought to set the good of reason above the danger of death.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, there is only one virtue necessary to shape these passions, since there is only one formal motive (*ratio*). In the case of

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<sup>30</sup> “Ad eandem virtutem pertinent refrernare superfluum motum, et firmare animum contra superfluum retractionem: sicut eadem fortitude est quae refrenat audaciam, et quae firmat animum contra difficultas quae accident in prosecutione magnorum. Si ergo humilitas refrenaret appetitum magnorum, sequeretur quod humilitas non esset virtus distincta a magnanimitate.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, arg. 3 (Leon. 10: 295). See also ST I-II, q. 60, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:390).

<sup>31</sup> ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, arg. 3 (Leon. 10: 295). See also ST II-II, q. 123, a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:7).

<sup>32</sup> See ST I-II q. 60, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:390).

<sup>33</sup> “In fortitudine invenitur eadem ratio refrenandi audaciam et firmandi animum contra timorem: utriusque enim ratio est ex hoc quod homo debet bonum rationis periculis mortis praestare. Sed in refrenando presumptionem spei, quod pertinent ad humilitatem, et in firmando animum contra desperationem, quod pertinent ad magnanimitatem, est alia et alia ratio. Nam ratio firmandi animum contra desperationem est adeptio proprii boni: ne scilicet, desperando homo se indignum reddat bono quod sibi competebat. Sed in reprimendo praesumptionem spei, ratio praecipua sumitur ex reverentia divina, ex qua contingit ut homo non plus sibi attribuat quam sibi competat secundum gradum quem est a Deo sortitus.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:295-96).

magnanimity's and of humility's moderation of hope and despair, however, there are two formal motives. Each virtue moderates for a different reason. For magnanimity, the formal motive is to encourage man to strive for his proper good according to his abilities, lest he fail to pursue a good of which he is worthy.<sup>34</sup> For humility, however, the formal motive is subjection to God out of reverence for Him: "The principle reason for restraining the presumption of hope is based on divine reverence, which shows that man should not attribute to himself more than is competent to him according to his position which God has allotted him. Therefore, it would seem that humility above all denotes the subjection of man to God."<sup>35</sup> Thus, by their distinct formal motives, St. Thomas clarifies that humility and magnanimity are essentially distinct, special virtues.<sup>36</sup>

St. Thomas makes the truly humble man's formal motive quite clear, stating it several times throughout this question as well as once in his *Scriptum Super Sententiis*.<sup>37</sup> Further, St.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. See also ST II-II, q. 129, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:57); a. 4, c. and ad. 4 (Leon. 10:64).

<sup>35</sup> "Sed in reprimendo praesumptionem spei, ratio praecipua sumitur ex reverentia divina, ex qua contingit ut homo non plus sibi attribuat quam sibi competat secundum gradum quem est a Deo sortitus. Unde humilitas praecipue videtur importare subiectionem hominis ad Deum." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:296).

<sup>36</sup> See also Carlson (141-44) where he explains the complexity of the soul's passions surrounding what is great. Summarizing St. Thomas, he says that a man may be moved with respect to this arduous good from two viewpoints, insofar as he hopes for it and insofar as he despairs of its accomplishment. Also, the virtuous man may pursue it reasonably and moderately or he may reject it reasonably and moderately. Carlson suggests two reasonable pairs of motions in the irascible appetite regarding superiority: an "appetition which consists principally in aggression, but demands moderate abstention; and flight or aversion, *fuga*, which consists principally in retreat, but demands moderate aggression. Hence there are not merely two, but four motions of the irascible appetite in regard to the arduous, two courting it, two fleeing it" (142). As I have mentioned above, one virtue is generally sufficient to regulate one pair of two opposing motions of the appetite according to a single formal motive as in the case of fortitude. However, two virtues are necessary, since there are two reasonable pairings of two distinct movements of passion of hope and two distinct movements of despair about the desire for what is great. In other words, there are two possible virtuous movements of hope for superiority in man's soul, each of which corresponds to one of the two possible virtuous movements of despair. The first pair consists principally in enkindling hope and suppressing despair, resulting in the "reasonable quest of the great" when what is great is proportionate to him (143). This is magnanimity. The second pair consists principally in restraining hope and encouraging despair, thereby reasonably flying from what is great when he is not competent to them. This is humility. I will come to a more complete comparison of these two virtues in their united pursuit of man's perfection in Chapter Two, Section 3, Parts i-ii, p. 60-66.

<sup>37</sup> See Ibid., q. 161, a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:298); a. 4, ad. 1. (Leon. 10:299); a. 6, c.; See also St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *In Quattuor Libros Sententiarum: Scriptum Super Sententiis* (=Sent.), lib. IV, d. 33, q. 3, a. 3, ad. 6, vol. 1, p. 603 (=1:603) *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, ed. Robert Busa, S.J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980).

Thomas is explicit that the root of the vice of pride is man's refusal to be subject to God.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, Josef Pieper notes that humility is not primarily a virtue that regards human relationships, but looks principally to God, thereby preserving "that which pride denies and destroys . . . the creaturely quality of man."<sup>39</sup> With the form and matter thus delineated, the virtue of humility emerges as the virtue that moderates the passion of hope in man's desire for what is great, chiefly by restraint and according to right reason, out of reverence for God.<sup>40</sup>

## **2. The Foundation of Humility in Knowledge**

After characterizing the matter and form of humility, according to St. Thomas, I will discuss, in the present section, the unique type of knowledge which humility requires as a foundation for its action. There are two parts: Part i will characterize the particular rule which guides the humble man; Part ii will specify the two terms which are compared in this rule, namely, man's finite perfection and God's infinite perfection. Man's finite perfection appears to be relative imperfection in comparison to God's infinite perfection. Man's knowledge of his own relative imperfection and God's absolute perfection is the knowledge that is the foundation of the virtue of humility.

### *i. The Rule of Humility*

A commonly recognized aspect of the virtue of humility is its special relation to truth. Humility is often defined as correlated with truth, or at least as conditioned by truth, in many

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<sup>38</sup> See ST II-II q. 162, a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:317) ; a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:321); a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:323).

<sup>39</sup> Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 191.

<sup>40</sup> "Sicut ex supra dictis patet, humilitas essentialiter in appetitu consistit, secundum quod aliquis refrenat impetum animi sui, ne inordinate tendat in magna: sed regulam habet in cognitione, ut scilicet aliquis non se existimet esse supra id quod est. Et utriusque principium et radix est reverentia quam quis habet ad Deum." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:307).

scholarly accounts.<sup>41</sup> At first glance, it would seem that the foundation of knowledge is not particular to humility as a moral virtue. In fact, “‘to know’ is required for all moral virtues, insofar as moral virtue operates according to right reason (*secundum rationem rectam*),” and yet moral virtue remains in the appetite, not in the intellect.<sup>42</sup> Recall that, according to St. Thomas, each of the four cardinal virtues, taken in a general sense, contributes to the formal aspects of every special virtue.<sup>43</sup> Insofar as prudence is a general virtue, it is essential for all rational direction of human actions.<sup>44</sup> As the chief of the moral virtues, prudence is “right reasoning concerning things to be done” (*recta ratio agibilium*), and thus, is a principle for all virtues.<sup>45</sup>

Is there a special requirement of knowledge in the case of humility then? If right reason is a prerequisite of every virtue, what is it about humility’s task that requires knowledge in a way that sets it apart from every other special virtue that also acts according to right reason? What is the knowledge particular to humility that is so keenly required? St. Thomas recognizes the particularly intellectual inclinations of this virtue since he devotes an entire article (article two) to a discussion of humility’s subject. Does this virtue belong in the appetite or in the intellect? St. Thomas concludes that the appetite is the subject of humility; however, the fact that he considers the question worthy of treatment implies that humility is indeed linked to knowledge in a unique way.

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Vance Morgan, “Humility and the Transcendent,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001): 308-309, which discusses the importance of incorporating true knowledge into the definition of humility, and criticizes other scholars whose definitions fail to recognize humility’s essential foundation in reality, particularly in self-knowledge. He criticizes Driver’s definition since her account involves ignorance and deliberate denial of the truth. Thus, her definition could not possibly characterize a virtue. See Julia Driver, “The Virtues of Ignorance,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989): 373-384; and “Modesty and Ignorance,” *Ethics* 109 (1999): 827-34. See also Owen Flanagan, “Virtue and Ignorance,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 87 (1990): 420-28.

<sup>42</sup> “Scire praexigitur ad virtutem morale, in quantum virtus moralis operatur secundum rationem rectam. Sed essentialiter in appetendo virtus moralis consistit.” ST I-II, q. 56, a. 2, ad. 2 (Leon. 6: 356).

<sup>43</sup> ST I-II, q. 61, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 6:394); a. 3, c. (Leon. 6:395); see also the Introduction, p. 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> See Houser, 67.

<sup>45</sup> ST I-II, q. 57, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:367).

In article two, the first three objectors assert that humility is “greatly concerned with knowledge” and is not, therefore, about the desire of what is great, but rather about the estimation of what is great, thereby suggesting humility’s subject is not the appetite, but rather the intellect.<sup>46</sup> In the corpus, St. Thomas responds that humility consists primarily in restraining man “from being borne toward that which is above him,” and thus, properly speaking, moderates this movement of the appetite.<sup>47</sup> However, he goes on to remark that, for this purpose, man must “know his disproportion to that which exceeds him, and thus, knowledge of one’s own imperfection pertains to humility *as a rule guiding the appetite*.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly, all moral virtues follow a rule that is the rectitude of reason and the measure of the mean between excess and deficiency.<sup>49</sup> However, regarding humility, St. Thomas distinguishes a specific form of knowledge necessary: knowledge of one’s own imperfection.

*ii. Two Terms of the Rule*

Since St. Thomas delineates this self-knowledge as “knowledge of one’s own imperfection,” he implies the comparison of two terms. If I am to be aware of my own imperfection, I must know myself as I am, but also I must know the “One” to whom I compare myself. According to St. Thomas, this “One” is God. In studying himself and comparing himself to God, the humble man comes to see his imperfection in relation to God, and is thus able to see rightly what humble position is proportionate to him as a creature before His Creator. In fact, in this comparison of himself with God, man comes to understand his own finite

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<sup>46</sup> ST II-II q. 161, a. 2, arg. 1-3 (Leon. 10:295).

<sup>47</sup> “Ad humilitatem proprie pertinent ut aliquis reprimat seipsum, ne feratur in ea quae sunt supra se. Ad hoc autem necessarium est ut aliquis cognoscat id in quo deficit a proportione eius quod suam virtutem excedit. Et ideo cognitio proprii defectus pertinet ad humilitatem sicut regula quaedam directive appetitus.” Ibid., q. 161, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:295).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> See ST I-II, q. 64, a. 3, c. (Leon. 6:415).

perfection as relative imperfection before God's infinite perfection. This is the case even for the virtuous man: "A thing may be said to be perfect according to its nature, state or time. In this way, a virtuous man is perfect; however, his perfection is found to be wanting in comparison with God."<sup>50</sup> Further, any perfection that God might extend to man is completely gratuitous, and man approaches it as one unworthy, but for the sanction of God Himself, Who bids man to accept his own perfection as pure gift.<sup>51</sup> This follows because in man there are two things, according to St. Thomas, namely, "that which is God's and that which is man's."<sup>52</sup> Whatever pertains to his imperfection is proper to man because of his sin, whatever pertains to his perfection belongs to God because He is the source of man's gifts.

Pieper sums up the self-knowledge proper to humility and derived from man's relative imperfection to God's infinite perfection: "Regarding God and its own creaturely quality, [humility] is an attitude of perfect recognition of that which, by reason of God's will, really *is*; above all, it is candid acceptance of this one thing: that man and humanity are neither God nor 'like God.'"<sup>53</sup> Pieper suggests that the truth apprehended by the humble man's juxtaposition of

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<sup>50</sup> "Alio modo potest dici aliquid perfectum secundum quid, puta secundum suam naturam, vel secundum statum aut tempus. Et hoc modo homo virtuosus est perfectus. Cuius tamen perfectio in comparatione ad Deum deficiens invenitur." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:293).

<sup>51</sup> Carlson points out that even the most perfect of creatures, such as Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, and all the saints and angels, who even now enjoy heavenly glory have cause for humility in their recognition that all their grace and glory is from God, since they are His creatures, 163.

<sup>52</sup> "In homine duo possunt considerari, scilicet id quod est Dei, et id quod est hominis." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, c. (Leon 10:298).

<sup>53</sup> Pieper, 191. See also St. Catherine of Siena, O. P., *The Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 42-43, where she also expresses in her image of the tree of charity and the soil of humility the relation of humility to charity as the "soil" from which it springs. I will discuss the role of humility in the growth of charity further on, but her image also highlights the relation between humility and self-knowledge and explains that in which this self-knowledge consists. Self-knowledge is a "circle traced on the ground" around the tree which is the "soul made for love and living only by love" (42). According to St. Catherine, "this circle in which this tree's root, the soul's love, must grow is true knowledge of herself, knowledge that is joined to me [God the Father] . . . This knowledge of yourself, and of me within yourself, is grounded in the soil of true humility, which is as great as the expanse of the circle (which is the knowledge of yourself united with me, as I have said)" (42-43). Like St. Thomas, St. Catherine also emphasizes the role of the two terms, the soul and God, and their relation in order for true self-knowledge to grow. Further, the virtue of humility, the "soil," expands as this self-knowledge, the "circle," which regards both the soul and God, also expands. St. Catherine also explains the confusion that would come about if the soul tried to only know herself without God: "But if your knowledge of yourself were isolated from me

self and God, opens his mind to reality as it *is*. In other words, humility facilitates knowledge of *all things*. The humble man is opened by wonder and awe to knowledge, and his words and actions evidence reality itself. If the humble man grasps keenly this most fundamental of his relationships that he has, insofar as he is a weak creature of the almighty Creator, then the order and structure of the whole world are laid bare to him, and his mind is free to welcome the richness of reality. The proud man, on the other hand, “overpassing the rule of reason,” hinders himself from gaining speculative knowledge insofar as he has removed its cause, since he does not subject his intellect to God.<sup>54</sup> Neither will he submit to the instruction of others so as to gain the knowledge of other men, nor will he attain the knowledge of truth which is affective since “the proud, while relishing their own superiority, despise the superiority of truth.”<sup>55</sup> Hence, proud men are crippled in their human power of evidencing the world, of bringing to light reality as it truly is in all of its splendor, since they scorn what really *is*, replacing reality with their own finite fantasies.

St. Thomas is clear, however, that the virtue of humility is not essentially in the intellect, because the formal object of humility does not consist in the knowledge of one’s imperfections, but in the application of this knowledge to both internal and external human actions. It is not only that man knows his nothingness and God’s perfection, but that he accepts them, firstly, by acquiring the interior disposition of subjection to God out of reverence for Him, and, secondly, by approaching his own position in the order of creation as one unworthy. The particular knowledge described is a condition of humility, something that is necessary for its existence.

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there would be no full circle at all. Instead, there would be a beginning in self-knowledge, but apart from me it would end in confusion” (43).

<sup>54</sup> ST II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:310).

<sup>55</sup> “Quia superbi, dum delectantur in propria excellentia, excellentiam vertitatis fastidiunt.” ST II-II, q. 162. a. 3, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:316).

The more extensive this knowledge of self before God, the lower man sinks in his own estimation before God to the earth (*humus*). Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange writes,

Humility . . . is founded upon truth, especially upon this truth: there is an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature. The more vividly and concretely this distance is perceived, the greater the humility. However high the creature may be, this abyss is infinite; the higher one climbs in true progress, the more evident becomes the infinite character of this chasm. In this sense, the highest is the most humble, because he is more enlightened.<sup>56</sup>

The humble man is, then, the most capable of evidencing the brilliant truth, for he sees this most central reality and is disposed to live according to it, thus disclosing to other men, by his very life, the order of creation to its Creator.

### **3. Humility in Relation to Neighbor**

In Section 2, I have emphasized that subjection to God out of reverence for Him is at the very center of St. Thomas's understanding of the virtue of humility. This motive is the essential form of the virtue that regulates the soul's desire for superiority and is founded in man's knowledge of God's greatness and his own nothingness. With such a clear emphasis on the vertical orientation of this virtue, the question arises: does this virtue also have a horizontal orientation in the humble man's relation to other men? In this section, I will examine this question in two parts. Part i will examine St. Thomas's account of humility in relation to one's neighbor, and Part ii will compare and relate the roles of the virtue of humility to the virtue of justice.

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<sup>56</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., "Humility According to St. Thomas," *The Thomist* 1 (1939): 4. Garrigou-Lagrange adds further to Carlson's point (*supra* footnote 51) that Mary, the saints, and angels not only have knowledge which is the foundation of humility, but that their progress into the height of knowledge of God's infinite greatness and their own littleness make them the humblest of God's creatures.

*i. Self-Abasement Before Neighbor*

St. Thomas acknowledges an apparent paradox in his account of humility through the first and second objectors of article 3. The objectors contend that, since humility is chiefly concerned with subjection to God, it would seem that it does not require subjection to *all* men.<sup>57</sup> In relation to God, one man's truthful comparison leads to an understanding of his own nothingness; but surely, in the truthful comparison of himself to other men, he ought to realize that he is superior to at least some men. Thus, humility before *all* men would be vicious, indicating delusion or a lack of true self-knowledge. No account of virtue can be based on such falsehood, especially in light of the previous discussion that the rule of reason distinctly directs humility.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, humility cannot concern interior subjection to all of one's neighbors, let alone exterior acts of subjection; such acts can be appropriate regarding God alone. These are the arguments of the first two objectors in article three.

St. Thomas's adept reply both preserves the formal motive of humility (subjection to God out of reverence for Him) while also extending its scope to include a qualified subjection to one's neighbor. He does this while also maintaining humility's essential foundation in truth. He responds that, since in man there are two things, that which is proper to him in himself, which is his imperfection, and that which is proper to God, Who is man's good and perfection; "thus, every man, ought to subject himself, according to that which is his own, to that which is of God in his neighbor."<sup>59</sup> Notice that St. Thomas says we ought (*debemus*) to revere whatever gifts are *of God* in our neighbor.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, we do this without falsehood, since if we compare that

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<sup>57</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, arg. 1 (Leon. 10:297).

<sup>58</sup> ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, arg. 2 (Leon. 10:297-8). See also Chapter One, Section 2, p. 16-21.

<sup>59</sup> "Et ideo quilibet homo, secundum id quod suum est, debet se cuilibet proximo subiicere quantum ad id quod est Dei in ipso." Ibid., a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:298).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., a. 3, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:298).

which we have of ourselves (our defects) with whatever gifts our neighbor has of God, we will know our own inferiority, and thus a reason to be subject to our neighbor.<sup>61</sup> St. Thomas is clear, however, about the difference in the extent of reverence that the humble man has for others and that which he has for God, for he says that, not only is man's reverence for his neighbor a type of reverence for God, but also that it ought to be less in degree than the reverence he bears for God Himself.<sup>62</sup>

Interestingly, St. Thomas changes verb tense in the corpus of article three from the imperative to the conditional, from how the humble man *ought* (*debet*) to subject himself to his neighbor to how he *may* (*potest*) subject himself, though this conditional subjection is not required by humility (*non hoc requirit humilitas*).<sup>63</sup> In fact, there is only one way in which man *ought* to be subject to neighbor: he should subject that which is his own to that which is of God in his neighbor, as we have just discussed. St. Thomas says that, in comparing his gifts from God to the gifts of God which belong to his neighbor, man is *not required* to subject himself, indeed, he may even prefer (*praeferre*) his gifts to his brother's without lessening his humility. Likewise, the humble man is *not required* to subject what he has of himself (his sins) to the sins that are another's. Thus, he need not regard himself the greatest of sinners. In both instances, St. Thomas, by adding the conditional sense of what man *may do*, implies possible degrees of

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., a. 3, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:298).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., a. 3, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:298).

<sup>63</sup> "Humilitas autem, sicut dictum est, proprie respicit reverentiam qua homo Deo subiicitur. Et ideo quilibet homo, secundum id quod suum est, **debet** se cuilibet proximo subiicere quantum ad id quod est Dei in ipso. **Non autem hoc requirit humilitas**, ut aliquis id quod est Dei in seipso, subiiciat ei quod apparet esse Dei in altero. Nam illi qui dona Dei participant, cognoscunt se ea habere, secundum illud I ad Cor. II, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis. Et ideo absque praeiudicio humilitatis **possunt** dona quae ipsi acceperunt, praeferre donis Dei quae aliis apparent collata, sicut apostolus, ad Ephes. III, dicit, aliis generationibus non est agnitum filiis hominum, sicut nunc revelatum est sanctis apostolis eius. Similiter etiam **non hoc requirit humilitas**, ut aliquis id quod est suum in seipso, subiiciat ei quod est hominis in proximo. Alioquin, oporteret ut quilibet reputaret se magis peccatorem quolibet alio, cum tamen apostolus absque praeiudicio humilitatis dicat, Galat. II, nos natura Iudaei, et non ex gentibus peccatores. **Potest** tamen aliquis reputare aliquid boni esse in proximo quod ipse non habet, vel aliquid mali in se esse quod in alio non est, ex quo potest ei se subiicere per humilitatem." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:298).

humility among men in the extent to which a man subjects himself to his neighbor beyond what is necessary to simply have the virtue of humility. Given the correlation of truth and humility discussed in Section 2, the man who has a greater degree of humility would also possess a greater degree of insight into the truth of his particular circumstances, those of his neighbor, and of both himself and neighbor before God.<sup>64</sup>

Once again, the humble man evidences truth. As Carlson observes, “it is to be carefully noted that humility need never resort to psychological sophistry.”<sup>65</sup> Though he must, as a minimum requirement of humility, subject what is his to what is God’s in his neighbor, he also *may* “without fear of violence to his judgment . . . believe himself the worst of sinners,” and in “comparing his share of good with his neighbor’s, he may justly suspect that there is much good in his neighbor, even if he does not see it, which he himself lacks” though he also *may not* and still possess a degree of humility.<sup>66</sup> How is it that these higher degrees of humility avoid “psychological sophistry?” St. Thomas says that, if the humble man, whose gifts from God are, by all outward appearances, greater than those of his neighbor, places himself beneath that neighbor, this subjection does not require falsity. St. Thomas says that “One may, without falsehood, believe oneself and pronounce oneself the most vile of all men on account of hidden faults which he recognizes in himself, and the gifts of God which others have.”<sup>67</sup> Again, however, St. Thomas is clear that such an act of humility is not necessary in order to simply have the virtue to some degree.

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<sup>64</sup> This point will be more fully discussed throughout Chapter Three. In particular, see Chapter Three, Section 3, Part ii, 81-88.

<sup>65</sup> Carlson, 176.

<sup>66</sup> Carlson, 176. See also end of citation from ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, c. and ad. 2 (Leon. 10:298), *supra* footnote 63.

<sup>67</sup> “Aliquis absque falsitate potest se credere et pronuntiare omnibus viliorem, secundum defectus occultos quos in se recognoscit, et dona Dei quae in aliis latent.” ST II-II q. 161, a. 6, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:308).

*ii. Humility and Justice*

According to Keys, this observation that humility includes a true appreciation of the gifts of others is a “powerful motive” which makes this a virtue “for even the most outstanding philosopher or political leader to cultivate.”<sup>68</sup> On her reading of St. Thomas, particularly in her commentary on St. Benedict’s degrees of humility in *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 161, a. 6, the humble man has three key characteristics: first and foremost, that he regards God reverently; second, that through clear self-knowledge he reaches accurate self-appraisal and self-love; and finally, that he improves as a social being in his relations with his brothers and sisters.<sup>69</sup> St. Thomas, she says, contends that the virtue of humility “actually buttresses social justice and the common good, disposing to peace through law-abidingness.”<sup>70</sup> To support this statement, she quotes from article five, where St. Thomas is discussing the rank of humility: “Now humility makes a man a good subject to ordinances of all kinds and in all matters.”<sup>71</sup> Keys contends that in this way St. Thomas links humility “in an important way with general or legal justice.”<sup>72</sup>

Though Keys points out the “important way” in which humility supports justice, Sheryl Overmyer argues that St. Thomas’s implicit alliance of justice and humility ought to be much more explicit. She contends that humility ought to be considered as a part of the virtue of justice rather than of temperance because of its relation to the virtues of religion and truthfulness, and its “thoroughgoing communal character.”<sup>73</sup> She argues that St. Thomas’s account of humility “resists privatizing humility to render it a merely ‘personal’ or ‘spiritual’ concern.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Mary M. Keys, “Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity,” *History of Political Thought* 24 (2003): 55. See also ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:298).

<sup>69</sup> Mary M. Keys, “Humility and Greatness of Soul,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 37 (2008): 218-219.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>71</sup> “Ordinationi autem facit hominem bene subiectum humilitas in universali quantum ad omnia.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:300), quoted in Keys, “Humility,” 219.

<sup>72</sup> Keys, “Humility,” 219.

<sup>73</sup> Sheryl Overmyer, “Exalting the Meek Virtue of Humility in Aquinas,” *The Heythrop Journal* 56 (2015): 656.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

I think, however, that St. Thomas would disagree with Overmyer's proposal, since it posits too close a relationship between humility and justice.<sup>75</sup> Justice, in the general sense, includes "all correctness producing equity among human actions."<sup>76</sup> In this sense, humility also is part of justice in the sense of general justice, just as it is part of prudence in the general sense of prudence or right reason, as discussed above.<sup>77</sup> However, humility is similar to *all* the moral virtues in its association with justice in the general sense. St. Thomas explains that "legal justice alone regards the common good directly, but by commanding *all* the other virtues it leads them to the common good."<sup>78</sup> Thus, Overmyer is right to recognize the use which justice makes of humility by directing its acts toward the common good. However, she oversteps the sense in which general sense of justice guides humility when she says that the "concern" of humility is not merely "personal" or "spiritual," suggesting that humility belongs to justice in the special sense, which is concerned primarily with giving another his due. However, the "personal" and the "spiritual" *are* precisely the form of humility, according to St. Thomas, since it moderates the movement of hope (formal object), which must be one's own passion of the irascible appetite, that is, "personal;" and since the formal motive is reverence for God, that is, "spiritual." Overmyer loses sight of the fact that humility "extends" into the social and political realm, but only secondarily. The primary acts of humility are above all *interior*: "Humility . . . chiefly abides inwardly in the soul."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> I will pass over the placement of humility as a part of temperance and modesty here since I discuss it in the following section (Section 4) of this chapter, p. 28-35.

<sup>76</sup> Houser, 67.

<sup>77</sup> See the Introduction, p. 2-3 and Chapter One, Section 2, Part i, p. 16-18.

<sup>78</sup> "Sola iustitia legalis directe respicit bonum commune: sed per imperium omnes alias virtutes ad bonum commune trahit." ST I-II, q. 61, a. 5, ad. 4 (Leon. 6:399).

<sup>79</sup> "Humilitas, sicut et ceterae virtutes, praecipue interius in anima consistit." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:298).

Finally, St. Thomas explicitly states that humility is not a civic virtue in his response to an objector who questions humility's status as a virtue because of its absence from Aristotle's list of virtues: "The Philosopher intended to treat of virtues as ordered to the civic life in which the subjection of one man to another according to the ordinance of law is determined, and thus it is contained under legal justice. Humility, however, insofar as it is a special virtue, chiefly regards the subjection of man to God, for Whose sake he subjects himself humbly to others."<sup>80</sup> Thus, the motive of the virtue of humility and that of justice are entirely different. Humility acts to submit, with reverence, to God. Justice acts to render to others their due. As Keys recognizes, these motives are by no means incompatible, and in fact, can work together to benefit the common good; but in suggesting that humility ought to be a part of justice, Overmyer does not appropriately acknowledge the essential differences which characterize these virtues. Further, the potential parts of justice imitate justice in that they are directed toward another, though they fall short either in the aspect of equality or in the aspect of due, and therefore humility is not a potential part of justice.<sup>81</sup> Again, humility is not directed toward another primarily, but toward the self by producing primary interior acts of moderation regarding the soul's desire for superiority. It is only directed toward neighbor through secondary acts of subjection to neighbor and ordinances of law. Unlike the potential parts of justice (religion, piety, observance, gratitude, vengeance, affability, liberality, and equity), humility does not contribute *directly* to

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<sup>80</sup> "Philosophus intendebat agere de virtutibus secundum quod ordinantur ad vitam civilem, in qua subiectio unius hominis ad alterum secundum legis ordinem determinatur, et ideo continetur sub iustitia legali. Humilitas autem, secundum quod est specialis virtus, praecipue respicit subiectionem hominis ad Deum, propter quem etiam aliis humiliando se subiicit." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad. 5 (Leon. 10:293).

<sup>81</sup> See ST II-II, q. 80, a. 1, c. (Leon. 9:174-75).

the good of other individuals, but does so only indirectly, nor does it concern a debt owed to others.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4. Humility as a Part of Temperance and Modesty

Another of Overmyer's critiques of St. Thomas's treatment of humility in the *Summa Theologiae* is that the place he gives humility is inadequate in light of the Christian tradition. Citing Servais Pinckaers, she makes the case that, because St. Thomas insists on following the philosophical ordering principles of Cicero and Andronicus, his schema does "not always allot to the specifically Christian virtues the place they deserve . . . Humility thus receives an overly modest position, which is understandable among pagan authors, but St. Thomas knows perfectly well its importance in Christian tradition."<sup>83</sup> His placement of humility as "merely a potential part of temperance," which is the lowest ranked cardinal virtue, and "under the subordinate virtue of modesty," which moderates matters of lesser difficulty, means that humility suffers, according to Overmyer, an inappropriately lowly place among the virtues, which is "a magnificent reversal of expectations."<sup>84</sup> She suggests that St. Thomas denigrates the virtue of humility by placing it where he does, and she proposes, as I have discussed, that humility should be considered as a potential part of justice since this virtue ranks higher among the cardinal virtues.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See Houser, 77-78 for a discussion of the parts of justice. See also Carlson, 386-90 where he discusses the distinction between humility and religion in their formal objects, moderation of hope in subjection to God as belonging to humility and to payment the debt of worship to God as belonging to religion. Both have the same formal motive: reverence for God.

<sup>83</sup> Pinckaers, O.P., *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 2005), 13, quoted in Overmyer, 652.

<sup>84</sup> Overmyer, 651.

<sup>85</sup> See all of ST I-II, q. 66, particularly a. 4 (Leon. 6:428-37). St. Thomas says that justice is most excellent among the moral virtues (after the theological virtues and the intellectual virtues, including prudence) since it is most akin to reason.

I think her suggestion fails to appreciate St. Thomas's contribution to the understanding of the schema of the virtues and humility's place among them. While Pinckaers draws attention to a possible "downplaying" of humility's importance by its placement among the moral virtues associated with temperance, he also readily appreciates St. Thomas's emphasis on human reason as an essential light given to man which does not conflict with, but may vigorously support the light of Christian revelation: "While discerning perfectly the difference between these two kinds of light, Thomas endeavors to show their convergence, which rests on a fundamental harmony."<sup>86</sup> Further, although St. Thomas does adopt the structure of the moral virtues of his pagan forebears, he by no means confines himself to their terms in his description of those same virtues. An example of this, from his question on humility, is his treatment of St. Benedict's twelve degrees of humility where, as Pinckaers remarks, "one could say that . . . [his] philosophical analysis rises toward Christian experience and places itself at the service of revelation."<sup>87</sup>

In addition, Overmyer herself admits that she does not "fault Thomas for the content of his treatment of humility," and devotes a whole section of her paper to his fine portrayal of humility throughout his other works for the sake of presenting his placement of humility in the *Summa Theologiae* "charitably."<sup>88</sup> Given that she "does not fault" the content of his question on humility in the *Summa Theologiae*, only his placement, I think it is appropriate to consider carefully where St. Thomas has chosen to place humility, and, more importantly, why he has placed it there. Further, considering the care and precision with which St. Thomas delineates the virtues, perhaps one ought to stand less as a critic over his placement of this virtue, and rather

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<sup>86</sup> Pinckaers, 12.

<sup>87</sup> Pinckaers, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Overmyer, 652 and 657-60.

look to receive more as a student of the instruction that this placement gives. Thus, I suggest that we pay due attention to what St. Thomas wishes to show about this virtue by its placement. In Part i of this section, I will show why St. Thomas considers humility to be a moral virtue rather than a theological or intellectual virtue and a potential part rather than a cardinal virtue, integral part, or subjective part. In Part ii, I will consider why humility is a potential part of temperance rather than another cardinal virtue, and also its relation to modesty.

*i. Humility as a Moral Virtue and as a Potential Part of Temperance*

First, is humility a theological virtue?<sup>89</sup> Carlson points out that St. Thomas himself admits, in his *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, “humility seems to be very near the theological virtues, since through them man subjects himself out of reverence to God and to others on God’s account.”<sup>90</sup> However, while reverence for God is the formal motive of humility, the formal object of humility is to moderate a movement of the appetite, which is not the formal object of any theological virtue. The object of faith, hope, and charity is God Himself.<sup>91</sup> Thus, humility cannot be a theological virtue as these three virtues are.

I have already discussed humility’s relation to the intellectual virtues, and since humility’s function is to moderate the passion of hope, its subject is the appetite, not the intellect, so it cannot be an intellectual virtue. Could humility be a cardinal virtue? St. Thomas explains, insofar as it expels pride, “humility is said to be the foundation of the spiritual edifice.”<sup>92</sup>

Perhaps, then, humility ought to be considered one of the cardinal virtues, which are like the

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<sup>89</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 4, arg. 1 (Leon. 10:299).

<sup>90</sup> “Humilitas videtur virtutibus [theologicis] propinquissima esse, quia per eam homo se ex reverentia deo subjicit, et per consequens aliis propter deum.” Sent., lib. IV, d. 33, q. 3, a. 3, ad. 6, (1:603). See also Carlson, 363.

<sup>91</sup> See ST I-II, q. 62, a. 2 (Leon. 6:402).

<sup>92</sup> “Et sic humilitas primum locum tenet, in quantum scilicet expellit superbiam . . . Et secundum hoc, humilitas dicitur spiritualis aedificii fundamentum.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:300).

“hinges” of the door, opening up to man that way of life which is “proportionate to man.”<sup>93</sup> The cardinal virtues are the good habits of the soul that help man act rationally in the most rudimentary operations of his nature. In the case of his social relations, this is giving others their due (justice). Regarding the appetite, this is repression of certain basic and unruly desires (temperance) and the firm support against the desire to avoid the arduous good in order to save one’s own life (fortitude). In the intellect, this is the rational direction of all human actions (prudence). Now humility also moderates the appetite, as do temperance and fortitude; but the object of these two virtues is “what is *most* basic and primitive, the individual’s urge to preserve his own life and that of the species to which he belongs.”<sup>94</sup> Temperance, as a special virtue, moderates the desire for drink, food and sex, and fortitude moderates the desire to preserve one’s own life.<sup>95</sup> Humility, however, moderates the desire for what is great that is by no means “*most* basic” to man’s nature. Further, while humility does strengthen all the virtues, St. Thomas says that it does so indirectly (*indirecte*), “by removing that which lies in ambush to destroy virtue’s good works; while the cardinal virtues strengthen the other virtues directly.”<sup>96</sup> The cardinal virtues confirm the other virtues by subjecting the chief activity of the various faculties in which they reside to the control of reason; thereby, as a “hinge” they prepare their respective faculties for the cultivation of the other virtues.<sup>97</sup> Thus, humility is not a cardinal virtue.

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<sup>93</sup> “Unde virtutes cardinales dicuntur in quibus fundatur vita humana, per quam in ostium introitur; vita autem humana est quae est homini proportionata.” St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *De Virtutibus Cardinalibus* (=DQVC), vol. 2, pg. 814 (=2:814) of *Quaestiones Disputatae*, a. 1, c., ed. E. Odetto (Rome: Marietti Press, 1949). All translations of *Quaestiones Disputatae de Virtutibus* are my own. I have, however, consulted the translation of Ralph McInerny in *Disputed Questions on Virtue* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998).

<sup>94</sup> Carlson, 366.

<sup>95</sup> See DQVC, a. 1 (2:814-15); ST II-II, q. 123, a. 11, c. (Leon. 10:23); ST II-II, q. 141, a. 7, c. (Leon. 10:130).

<sup>96</sup> “Humilitas firmat omnes virtutes indirecte, removendo quae bonis virtutum operibus insidiantur, ut pereant; sed in virtutibus cardinalibus firmantur aliae virtutes directe.” DQVC, a. 1, ad. 13 (2:816).

<sup>97</sup> See Carlson, 365-67.

Hence, humility is a moral virtue and a part of one of the cardinal virtues. St. Thomas lists three kinds of parts that may be assigned to a cardinal virtue: “‘integral,’ as wall, roof and foundation are parts of a house; ‘subjective,’ as ox and lion are parts of animal; and ‘potential,’ as nutritive and sensitive are parts of the soul.”<sup>98</sup> Integral parts are conditions required for a perfect act of the particular cardinal virtue. For example, shame and honesty are necessary for man to exercise the virtue of temperance.<sup>99</sup> Humility cannot be an integral part of temperance, since it has its own matter, formal object, and motive, so that it does not directly complete and perfect the acts of temperance.<sup>100</sup> The subjective parts refer to the “species of a virtue that must be differentiated according to a different matter or object.”<sup>101</sup> The subjective parts of temperance moderate two types of the pleasures of touch: food (abstinence) and sex (chastity). Now humility does not moderate a principal matter, but rather a secondary matter, as we have discussed above. Therefore, humility must be a potential part of temperance.

### *ii. Humility as a Potential Part of Temperance and of Modesty*

As discussed above, St. Thomas says humility cannot be a potential part of prudence or justice.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps fortitude, then, would be the most appropriate cardinal virtue under which to place humility, since both virtues inhere in the irascible appetite. However, although humility moderates the passion of hope, which is in the irascible appetite, humility cannot be a part of fortitude, according to St. Thomas, because “parts are assigned to principal virtues, not according

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<sup>98</sup> “Respondeo dicendum quod triplex est pars: scilicet *integralis*, ut paries, tectum, et fundamentum sunt partes domus; *subiectiva*, sicut bos et leo sunt partes animalis; et *potentialis*, sicut nutritivum et sensitivum sunt partes animae.” ST II-II, q. 48, a. 1, c. (Leon. 8:365).

<sup>99</sup> See ST II-II, q. 143, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:138).

<sup>100</sup> See ST II-II, q. 48, a. 1, c. (Leon. 8:365).

<sup>101</sup> “Partes autem subiectivae alicuius virtutis dicuntur species eius. Oportet autem diversificare species virtutum secundum diversitatem materiae vel obiecti.” ST II-II, q. 143, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:138).

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter One, Section 3, Part ii, p. 25-27.

to agreement in subject or in matter, but *in agreement according to the formal mode.*<sup>103</sup> While it is true that humility resides in the same appetitive power as fortitude, fortitude *confirms* and *stabilizes* the irascible passion of daring whereas humility chiefly *suppresses* and *restrains* hope.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, since humility and fortitude do not operate according to the same mode (*modus*), humility cannot be a part of fortitude.

Therefore, St. Thomas places humility as a potential part of temperance because humility shares the same mode (*modus*) as temperance, which is “the restraint or repression of the impetuosity of some passion.”<sup>105</sup> He further places humility under another of temperance’s potential parts, modesty (*modestia*). In placing modesty under temperance, St. Thomas is following Cicero’s lead; however, his reasoning is much clearer and more fully developed than Cicero’s brief mention of this virtue.<sup>106</sup> While temperance enforces reasonable moderation of those desires of the soul which are most arduous to control, namely, the pleasures of touch, “it is necessary,” says St. Thomas, “that there be a certain virtue to moderate in ordinary

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<sup>103</sup> “Partes principalibus virtutibus assignatur, non secundum convenientiam in subiecto vel in materia, *sed secundum convenientiam in modo formali* . . . Et ideo, licet humilitas sit in irascibili sicut in subiecto, ponitur tamen pars modestiae et temperantiae propter modum.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 4, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:299), emphasis mine.

<sup>104</sup> See Ibid., q. 161, a. 2, ad. 3. (Leon. 10:295-96). Similarly, although magnanimity and humility share the same matter (the passion of hope), they do not agree in their chief mode of operation since magnanimity chiefly strengthens hope and humility suppresses it. Thus, although magnanimity is appropriately placed under fortitude, humility is not. See Ibid., q. 161, a. 4, ad. 3. (Leon. 10:299) and Chapter One, Section 1, p. 8 and 12.

<sup>105</sup> “Modus autem temperantiae, ex quo maxime laudem habet, est refrenatio vel repressio impetus alicuius passionis. Et ideo omnes virtutes refrenantes sive reprimentes impetus aliquarum affectionem, vel actiones moderantes, ponuntur partes temperantiae.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:299).

<sup>106</sup> Cicero says that temperance has three parts: continence, clemency, and modesty. He says only that “Modesty is that sense of shame or decency which secures observance and firm authority for what is honorable.” Cicero, *De Inventione: De Optimo Genere Oratorum*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 331. The Latin text is: “modestia, per quam pudor honesti curam et stabilem comparat auctoritatem.” (300). St. Thomas cites this text, remarking that Cicero separates the moderation of punishment (clemency) from modesty. He then further states that Cicero “holds modesty to be about all remaining matters that require moderation.” Foley points out that this characterization is not justified by this text which St. Thomas cites from in the *De Inventione*. St. Thomas, then, is developing his own account of modesty since he claims its parts each moderate one of four ordinary matters which Cicero does not explicitly associate with modesty, namely, “the movement of the mind toward a certain superiority,” “the desire of those things that pertain to knowledge,” “bodily movements and action which ought to be done becomingly and honestly,” and “in outward show, in dress and the like.” See ST II-II, q. 160, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:290) and Michael P. Foley, “Thomas Aquinas’ Novel Modesty,” *History of Political Thought* 25 (2004), 405.

(*mediocribus*) things, which are not so difficult to moderate. And this virtue is called modesty.”<sup>107</sup> Modesty, however, is a general virtue about “ordinary matters,” and thus, has special virtues assigned to it which regard *particular* ordinary matters.<sup>108</sup> In the case of humility, the ordinary matter moderated by this virtue is the soul’s desire for superiority. In placing humility here, St. Thomas departs from Cicero’s vague characterization of modesty by specifying four kinds of ordinary matter along with four corresponding virtues to moderate the soul’s longing for them: humility, studiousness, modesty in bodily movement, and modesty in dress.<sup>109</sup>

In concluding this section, I would like to discuss what might be learned about humility by studying St. Thomas’s placement of it. His association of temperance, modesty, and humility highlights the chief action of these three virtues together: the restraint of the unruly desires of the human passions. His intention is not to denigrate or disregard humility’s importance in the spiritual life by making it a potential part, since “The cardinal virtues are said to be more principal virtues than all the others, not because they are more perfect than all the rest, but because human life turns principally on them and other virtues are founded on them.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, Overmyer’s accusation is missing the point of St. Thomas’s full treatment of the virtues. His account strives to give a precise and complete account of all the virtues as they coordinate and

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<sup>107</sup> “Unde necessarium est quod sit quaedam virtus moderativa in aliis mediocribus, in quibus non est ita difficile moderari. Et haec virtus vocatur modestia, et adiungitur temperantiae sicut principali.” ST II-II, q. 160, a. 1, c. (Leon 10:289).

<sup>108</sup> See Ibid., q. 160, a. 2, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:290). I have chosen to translate *modestia* as “modesty;” however, *modestia* does not refer only to modesty in dress, as we are inclined to understand it in contemporary culture, but rather should be taken more broadly as the virtue which moderates desire of things which are not so difficult to moderate. In fact, St. Thomas includes modesty in dress as a potential part of *modestia* among the other potential parts of *modestia*, which are humility, studiousness, and modesty in movements.

<sup>109</sup> See the questions on humility, ST II-II, q. 161 (Leon. 10:292-309); studiousness, *ibid.*, q. 166 (Leon. 10:342-44); modesty in bodily movements, *ibid.*, q. 168 (Leon. 10:349-55); modesty in dress, *ibid.*, q. 169 (Leon. 10:356-62).

<sup>110</sup> “Virtutes cardinales dicuntur principaliores omnibus aliis, non quia sunt omnibus aliis perfectiores, sed quia in eis principaliter versatur humana vita, et super eas aliae virtutes fundantur.” DQVC, a. 1, ad. 12, (2:816). The translation of this text is taken from Houser, 169.

perfect the soul of man. The reason for his placement is not in order to *rank* the virtues; this he does elsewhere, and I will discuss humility's rank in the next section.<sup>111</sup> Rather, his careful placement of humility clarifies the mode of this virtue in its restraint of hope and its relation to the other virtues in the soul as a potential part of temperance. Further, as St. Thomas points out, by considering humility as a potential part of modesty, he highlights that humility is about lesser or ordinary matters which require moderation rather than what is most difficult (the pleasures of touch) which temperance is about. Though he follows Cicero's general schema in his placement of humility, St. Thomas's novel account of the various parts of the virtues offers an instructive reason for doing so, "reflecting . . . his goal in achieving theoretical precision for which his distant predecessors did not strive."<sup>112</sup>

## 5. The Rank of Humility Among the Virtues

In Overmyer's claim that St. Thomas does not give humility its proper place among the virtues, she seems to overlook article five of St. Thomas's question on humility. She only mentions article five, which asks whether humility is chief (*potissima*) among the virtues, in order to decry St. Thomas's failure to link humility explicitly with charity.<sup>113</sup> I think, however, that due consideration of this article reveals St. Thomas's careful and fair ranking of humility among the virtues. Humility is by no means chief among the virtues; however, its importance and, in a particular sense, its preeminence in the spiritual life are duly observed in his account. St. Thomas asks a similar question about the ranking of many of the virtues.<sup>114</sup> Given the high

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<sup>111</sup> See p. 35-39 below.

<sup>112</sup> Foley, 404.

<sup>113</sup> Overmyer, 659.

<sup>114</sup> Here are a few of the places where he asks this question about other virtues: charity, (ST II-II, q. 23, a. 6, (Leon. 8:170)), mercy (Ibid., q. 30, a. 4 (Leon. 8:423)), justice (Ibid., q. 58, a. 12 (Leon. 9:19)), religion (Ibid., q. 81, a. 6 (Leon. 9:183)), obedience (Ibid., q. 104, a. 3 (Leon. 9:387-388)), patience (Ibid., q. 136, a. 2 (Leon. 10: 99)), clemency and meekness (Ibid., q. 157, a. 4 (Leon. 10:270-271)).

place of humility in the teachings of Jesus, it is not surprising that we find this question in St. Thomas's treatment of humility as well. In this section, I will examine article 5, in which St. Thomas treats the rank of humility among the virtues. Part i will discuss his treatment of the rank of humility according to the ordinance of reason, and Part ii will consider how St. Thomas treats humility's role in the spiritual life.

*i. The Rank According to the Ordinance of Reason*

St. Thomas often gives a nuanced explanation of the greatness of a particular virtue among the others, since virtues, according to him, may be great in two ways: simply or relatively. St. Thomas says that a virtue can be considered as greater or lesser *simply* when it is considered "in its proper specific nature."<sup>115</sup> Since the object determines the species of a virtue, "simply speaking, that virtue which is more excellent has the more excellent object."<sup>116</sup> Hence, St. Thomas has placed humility below the theological virtues, which "have the last end as their object."<sup>117</sup> The theological virtues are then followed by the intellectual virtues, since their objects, namely, things considered universally, are more excellent than the objects of the appetite, namely, things considered in themselves, since the latter objects restrict being to the particular.<sup>118</sup> Hence, humility is below the intellectual virtues.

Within the moral virtues, distinctions in ranking become *relative* depending upon the perspective from which the virtues are considered.<sup>119</sup> While all moral virtues perfect the appetites, both the intellective appetite (the will) and the sensitive appetite, by guiding them in

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<sup>115</sup> "Simpliciter autem consideratur unumquodque, quando consideratur secundum propriam rationem suae speciei." ST I-II, q. 66, a. 3 (Leon. 6:431).

<sup>116</sup> "Unde, simpliciter loquendo, illa virtus nobilior est quae habet nobilius obiectum." Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> "Unde virtutes theologicae, quae habent ultimum finem pro obiecto, sunt potissimae." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, c. (Leon 10:300). See also ST II-II, q. 23, a. 6, c. (Leon. 8:170).

<sup>118</sup> See ST, I-II, q. 66, a. 3 (Leon. 6:431).

<sup>119</sup> See Carlson 371-80.

accord with right reason, their relative ranking may be considered with reference to different standards. These virtues, therefore, may be considered “in light of the potencies in which they inhere, or in the light of their formal objects, or in the light of their greater or less necessity to different individuals, or in the light of the wider or narrower extent to which they control man’s appetite, his activity toward his goal.”<sup>120</sup> Under each standard, the moral virtues fall into different orderings, and thus the apparent contradictions between various rankings of St. Thomas’s moral virtues dissolve.

In article five of his question on humility, St. Thomas is clear about the perspective in which he will consider the ranking of the moral virtues, namely, “according as they are ordered toward the final end.”<sup>121</sup> Essentially, this ordinance to the end is in the order of reason, which the appetite participates in, since the appetite is naturally inclined to obey reason.<sup>122</sup> St. Thomas says that the ordinance of all things universally to man’s end is *established* by justice. Humility follows by *subjecting* man’s appetite to those ordinances established by justice. Therefore, justice is more excellent than humility, since humility follows secondarily that which justice establishes primarily. In this sense, all human operations, even those that are interior and that shape man’s character, fall under the purview of legal justice. Even though legal justice pertains in itself to man’s relationship with others, insofar as interior acts make a man to be a certain kind of man with certain habits and dispositions, he will have a corresponding external impact on the good of the community from his interior formation. As Carlson puts it, “there is no operation, however secret and personal, be it thought or desire or delectation, which escapes the watchful

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<sup>120</sup> Carlson, 372.

<sup>121</sup> “Secundario autem attenditur prout secundum rationem finis ordinatur ea quae sunt ad finem.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:300).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. See also ST I-II q. 56, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:359).

eye of legal justice.”<sup>123</sup> Therefore, justice, particularly legal justice, regulates, in this general sense, all of man’s appetite and the moral virtues to act for the common good.<sup>124</sup> Humility also is universal, although, not in the establishment of ordinances, but rather insofar as it makes a man *subject* to ordinances of all kinds and in all matters.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, humility is less excellent than justice is, but more excellent than all the other moral virtues, which also subject the soul to the ordinance of reason, but only in one particular matter.<sup>126</sup>

## *ii. The Foundation of the Spiritual Life*

Aside from humility’s rank among the moral virtues according to participation in the ordinance of reason, St. Thomas also acknowledges that “the whole New Law consists in two things: in humility and meekness.”<sup>127</sup> Insofar as the spiritual growth of man is concerned, humility is “foundational” and “holds the first place inasmuch as it expels pride, which God resists; humility makes man submissive and always open to receiving the influx of divine grace.”<sup>128</sup> The splendor of humility appears most fully in the spiritual life. In his recognition and acceptance of his position within the order of creation and the workings of Providence, man roots out the pride that hinders the very gift of grace, without which he cannot set forth in seeking his supernatural end.

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<sup>123</sup> Carlson, 372.

<sup>124</sup> ST II-II, q. 58, a. 5, c. (Leon. 9:13).

<sup>125</sup> ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:301).

<sup>126</sup> See Carlson, 373-80 for a discussion of how humility surpasses mercy, religion and obedience in this way. St. Thomas refers to these three virtues as being greater than humility, but relatively from a different aspect than that which he takes in ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5 regarding humility’s rank. He concludes that in all cases, however, humility participates more fully and widely in the ordinance of reason.

<sup>127</sup> “Tota enim lex nova consistit in duobus: in mansuetudine et humilitate.” St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Reportationes: Opuscula Dubiae Authenticitatis: Super Evangelium Matthaei* (=SEM), cap. 11, l. 3, vol. 6, p. 165 (=6:165) of *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, ed. Robert Busa, S.J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980).

<sup>128</sup> “Et sic humilitas primum locum tenet: in quantum scilicet expellit superbiam, cui Deus resistit, et praebet hominibus subditum et semper patulum ad suscipiendum influxum divinae gratiae.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:300)

This is why Christ commended humility, namely, because pride is an “impediment to man’s salvation,” so that while he strives for superiority in worldly matters, his soul is lost.<sup>129</sup> However, with humility, suddenly the soul is open to the glorious riches of grace that God wishes to pour forth upon the heart of man. “Humility is, therefore, a certain disposition to man’s free access to spiritual and divine goods.”<sup>130</sup> Of course, the open disposition of the humble man is not as excellent as man’s direct advancement toward the Divine in Himself, and thus, humility is not as excellent as the theological virtues. Nevertheless, insofar as humility opens man’s soul to God’s grace, St. Thomas says, humility and charity increase in direct proportion to one another: “The more a man has humility, so much more does he love God, and the more he despises his own superiority, and attributes so much less to himself; thus, the more a man has of charity, the more he has of humility.”<sup>131</sup> St. Thomas then rightly upholds and acknowledges humility’s essential place as foundational among the virtues in the spiritual growth of man while concurrently recognizing that it is *not* the greatest of the virtues, as other virtues better conform man to the ordinance of reason, and as still other virtues better directly guide his advancement toward God. In article 5, therefore, St. Thomas reveals the essential and nuanced, albeit humble, role that humility plays in the friendship of man with God, since “it [i.e. the friendship] is a friendship of master and slave, of Creator and creature.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> “Ideo Christus praecipue humilitatem nobis commendavit, quia per hoc maxime removetur impedimentum humanae salutis, quae consistit in hoc quod homo ad caelestia et spiritualia tendat, a quibus homo impeditur dum in terrenis magnificari studet.” Ibid., a. 5, ad. 4 (Leon 10:301).

<sup>130</sup> “Et sic humilitas est quasi quaedam disposition ad liberum accessum hominis in spiritualia et divina bona.” Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> “Ergo quanto magis habet homo de humilitate, tanto magis diligit Deum, et magis excellentiam sui contemnit, et tanto minus sibi attribuit: sic quanto homo plus habet de caritate, habet etiam magis de humilitate.” SEM, cap. 18, l. 1 (6:186).

<sup>132</sup> Carlson, 399.

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**CHAPTER TWO: HUMILITY AND MAGNANIMITY AS PAIRED VIRTUES (DUPLEX  
VIRTUS) CONCERNING THE ARDUOUS GOOD (BONUM ARDUUM)**

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Having seen how St. Thomas characterizes humility as a special virtue and places it among the other virtues, I would like to turn in the present chapter to the startling alliance that St. Thomas makes between humility and magnanimity, calling them a pair of virtues (*duplex virtus*) concerning the arduous good (*bonum arduum*). I call this alliance “startling” because St. Thomas’s revered predecessor in the characterization of virtues, Aristotle, implies there is an incompatibility between these two virtues. Given St. Thomas’s reverence for Aristotle’s characterization of the virtues, including his portrait of the magnanimous man, which, I submit, St. Thomas respectfully transposes, his clear departure from Aristotle on the complementarity of these two virtues is a significant break that wonderfully illuminates how St. Thomas understands both virtues. Thus, in trying to get at precisely what humility is according to St. Thomas, it is important to take a closer look at the distinction, and also the partnership, between these two virtues in his exposition of them.

This chapter will have three sections. Section 1 will discuss Aristotle’s treatment of magnanimity, particularly pointing out the tensions that other scholars have noted in his characterization of the magnanimous man, as well as, magnanimity’s apparent incompatibility with humility. I will also consider Aristotle’s general reticence about humility, and point out the few remarks that he makes on humility in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Section 2 will consider St. Thomas’s treatment of magnanimity, in particular, how it compares and contrasts with Aristotle’s account. I will also examine how St. Thomas reads Aristotle’s few statements on

humility. Finally, in Section 3, I will consider the paradoxical alliance between humility and magnanimity that St. Thomas teaches. I will describe how he resolves the apparent contradictions between these virtues, and how the virtues unite in their pursuit of man's perfection, though each carries out distinctive acts in this pursuit.

### **I. Aristotle on Magnanimity and His Reticence on Humility**

St. Thomas approached Aristotle's writings as those of a keen and brilliant philosopher, who had pondered the world and displayed the truth in multiple sciences. Aristotle embodied, from St. Thomas's perspective, the power of natural human reason, which he expertly employed as an incisive instrument for revealing truth. However, at the same time, St. Thomas, as a philosopher and theologian in his own right, was firm in his departure from and correction of Aristotle in his own writing and teaching. In St. Thomas's explicit assertion of an alliance between humility and magnanimity, he clearly departs from the Philosopher.

Because St. Thomas's account of the virtue magnanimity is principally indebted to Aristotle's account, I will begin in Part i of this section by giving a brief overview of Aristotle's characterization of magnanimity. In Part ii, I will review tensions between the characteristics that seem vicious and those that are virtuous in the character of the magnanimous man that have other scholars have pointed out. I will also review the few texts within the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle discusses humility, and I will argue its incompatibility with the magnanimous man on his account.

#### *i. Aristotle's Characterization of the Magnanimous Man*

The range of scholarly opinions on Aristotle's magnanimous man and on the degree to which St. Thomas adopts and adapts his portrayal is wide. Some judge St. Thomas's adaptation

of Aristotle's account of magnanimity to be an essential transformation that is problematic and that diminishes the greatness and statesmanship of the magnanimous man as Aristotle describes him.<sup>1</sup> Others claim that St. Thomas's account of magnanimity is a critique of Aristotle that offers a much needed and enlightened transformation of this virtue in light of Christian revelation, and enhances it by his pairing it with humility.<sup>2</sup> Finally, others emphasize the extent to which St. Thomas embraces Aristotelian magnanimity and does not relinquish, but rather explains, some of the more controversial qualities of the magnanimous man, relieving the tensions within Aristotle's account.<sup>3</sup> I will not attempt to resolve these differences of opinion here, nor will I attempt to give a comprehensive account of Aristotle's exposition of magnanimity within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will give a brief summary of his account and list some of the problems which other scholars have pointed out in order facilitate a discussion of St. Thomas's adaptation of Aristotelian magnanimity, particularly his "boldly yolking" magnanimity and humility as paired virtues (*duplex virtus*).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Harry V. Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism: A Study of the Commentary by Thomas Aquinas on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 116-41 and Larry Arnhart, "Statesmanship as Magnanimity: Classical, Christian & Modern," *Polity* 16 (1983): 263-83.

<sup>2</sup> See Keys, "Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity," 37-65, where she argues that St. Thomas's account of magnanimity offers a "subtle yet far-reaching critique of important aspects of Aristotelian magnanimity, a critique with roots in Aquinas' theology, yet comprising a significant philosophic reappraisal of Aristotle's account of human excellence," 37. See also Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, "Aquinas' Virtues of Acknowledged Dependence: A New Measure of Greatness," *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (2004): 214-27, where she argues that magnanimity is an infused virtue in St. Thomas's account, and thus, departs from Aristotelian magnanimity in kind since the magnanimous man's dependence on God was not acknowledged in Aristotle's account.

<sup>3</sup> See Tobias Hoffmann, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Magnanimity," *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by Istvan Pieter Bejczy, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008), 101-29, where he portrays St. Thomas's own attitude towards Aristotle's account as "unqualifiedly positive" since when he departs from Aristotle, he does so in a way that is "not reprehensible but rather laudable" and in order to make sense of tensions within Aristotle's own account 101-2. See also Carson Holloway, "Christianity, Magnanimity, and Statesmanship," *The Review of Politics* 61 (1999): 581-604, where he argues for the compatibility of Aristotelian magnanimity with Christian morality by using St. Thomas's account to show that qualities of the magnanimous man such as love for honor and contempt for other men are not incompatible with demands of Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> Foley, 408. See also ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:292).

Aristotle says that the magnanimous man is one who “thinks himself worthy of great things and is worthy of them.”<sup>5</sup> He is concerned with honors, since this is the “prize appointed for noble deeds,”<sup>6</sup> but he only claims these insofar as he deserves.<sup>7</sup> He must be good to a great degree, having a certain greatness in every virtue, so that his magnanimity is the “ornament” or “crown” of every virtue, since it makes his other virtues more excellent.<sup>8</sup> Although he is deserving of honor and justly claims it, he does so in moderation, looking upon what is great such as wealth, power, and good fortune in such a way that he is “neither exalted by prosperity nor cast down by misfortune.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, he really does not even regard honor itself as a particularly great thing, but desires only that he is truly worthy of high honors.<sup>10</sup> He is courageous in deeds of great valor.<sup>11</sup> He is a man of few deeds, waiting for occasion to do great acts of virtue.<sup>12</sup> He speaks and acts openly towards friends and enemies, since he cares more for the truth than the opinions of others.<sup>13</sup> He forgets injuries done to him, since he despises evil,

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE), book 4, chapter 8, lines 1123b1-2 (=4.8.1123b1-2), vol. 47.2, p. 225 (=Leon. 47.2:225) *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed. (Rome, 1969). St. Thomas did not know Greek, and he read the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Latin translation by William of Moerbeke. The Moerbeke translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as St. Thomas’s commentary on it, will be quoted from the Leonine edition of the commentary. In the Leonine edition, however, the traditional Bekker chapter-divisions of Aristotle do not always align with St. Thomas’s division of chapters in his commentary. Therefore, the references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* will include indications of book, chapter (following St. Thomas’s chapter divisions), Bekker page and line numbers, and the volume and page numbers of the Leonine edition; e.g. NE 4.8.1123b1-2 (Leon. 47.2:225). References to Aquinas’ commentary on the text will indicate volume, page numbers, and line numbers; e.g. Leon. 47.2:226.40-45. All translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and St. Thomas’s commentary are my own, although I have consulted the following as well: *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, Vol. 2, trans. C.I. Litzinger (Chicago: Regnery, 1964); and *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2009).

<sup>6</sup> NE 4.8.1123b.19 (Leon. 47.2: 225).

<sup>7</sup> NE 4.8.1123b.24 (Leon. 47.2: 225).

<sup>8</sup> NE 4.8.1123b.27-1124a.1 (Leon. 47.2:225-26).

<sup>9</sup> NE 4.9.1124a.13-16 (Leon. 47.2:228).

<sup>10</sup> NE 4.9.1124a.18 (Leon. 47.2:228).

<sup>11</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.6-9 (Leon. 47.2:232).

<sup>12</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.22-25 (Leon. 47.2:232).

<sup>13</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.22-30 (Leon. 47.2:232).

refrains from gossip, is not anxious about giving and receiving praise or blame, and is uninterested in trivial matters, but only in those that bear great weight.<sup>14</sup>

*ii. Two Tensions in the Account of the Magnanimous Man*

As he is thus far described, the magnanimous man is a man of exemplary virtue who surpasses other men in virtue. There are, however, several characteristics of Aristotle's magnanimous man not yet mentioned that appear to be contrary to virtue. Many scholars regard these characteristics as problematic for his claim that the magnanimity is indeed the "crown of the virtues." I will argue that, because of these negative characteristics, the magnanimous man seems ignorant of his own dependency, and thus, appears as vicious, in this regard, not virtuous. I will discuss this as a general tension in Aristotle's text. In Sections 2 and 3 of this chapter, I will discuss how St. Thomas addresses and clarifies this tension between the magnanimous man's ignorance of his own dependence. Nevertheless, even in his clarifications, he deliberately remains faithful to the essential features of the magnanimous man as described in the original exposition of the Philosopher.<sup>15</sup>

*a. His Seemingly Vicious Characteristics*

Some of the magnanimous or great-souled man's problematic characteristics that are often pointed out include his eagerness in helping others, but his distaste for receiving services.<sup>16</sup> He is quick to remember those upon whom he has bestowed great favors, but suffers to remember those from whom he has gratuitously received; likewise, he enjoys hearing of those

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<sup>14</sup> NE 4.10.1125a.2-7 (Leon. 47.2:232-33).

<sup>15</sup>See Hoffmann (117-24) for a discussion of two further tensions within Aristotle's text (what magnanimity is concerned with and how it grows out of and impacts the other virtues while being distinct from them) which Aquinas clarifies in a particularly Aristotelian fashion.

<sup>16</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.7-8 (Leon. 47.2:232).

benefits he has conferred upon others, but is pained at hearing of those done for him.<sup>17</sup> He does not like to show himself in need of anything or almost anything, and thus, he bears himself as one who is generally self-sufficient and independent of others.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the magnanimous man holds others in contempt.<sup>19</sup>

According to Hoffmann, these attitudes and actions of the magnanimous man originate in his “desire for superiority and self-sufficiency.”<sup>20</sup> Keys further points out that the “crown of the virtues” does not seem to be its own reward, since Aristotle says three times that the great-souled man is “he to whom *nothing is great*.”<sup>21</sup> The paradox of Aristotle’s magnanimous man is that, in order to both be and appear as self-sufficient among his peers, he is distinctly “in need of others as his inferiors,” yet he has an inability to exult in goods of which he is not the cause.<sup>22</sup> As DeYoung notes, the great-souled man appears to be more concerned with his own superior position than in loving and working for the common good; and his very self-satisfaction depends on thinking of himself as superior to others: “Even though he measures greatness primarily in terms of virtue, the magnanimous man’s excellence is still valued at least in part because it supersedes that of others whom he outdoes, despises, and condescends to . . . the standard of comparison is still emphatically horizontal.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the magnanimous man appears as having an asocial and unattractive disposition and as being ignorant of his own inescapable dependency on others.

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<sup>17</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.12-17 (Leon. 47.2:232).

<sup>18</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.17-18 (Leon. 47.2:232).

<sup>19</sup> NE 4.9.1124b.5-6 (Leon. 47.2:229).

<sup>20</sup> Hoffmann, 105. See also Craig A. Boyd, “Pride and Humility: Tempering the Desire for Excellence,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 248-51; DeYoung, 218; Keys, “Aquinas,” 42-43; and Foley, 408-9.

<sup>21</sup> Keys, “Aquinas,” 41. See also NE 4.8.1123b.32-3 (Leon. 47.2:225); 4.10.1125b.3-4 (Leon. 47.2:229); 4.10.1125b.15-16 (Leon. 47.2:232).

<sup>22</sup> Keys, “Aquinas,” 41.

<sup>23</sup> DeYoung, 218.

*b. His Incompatibility with Humility*

Finally, there are two references made concerning the lowly man in Aristotle's account. The second says that "all flatterers are obsequious and lowly (*humiles*) people."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps this is why, according to DeYoung, Christian humility is something which "Aristotle cannot countenance as anything but baseness and vice."<sup>25</sup> A further, more approving remark about humility comes near the beginning of his treatment of magnanimity. This comment is made merely in passing and is offered as a characterization of what the magnanimous man is precisely not. It is that "he who is worthy of small things and considers himself such is temperate, though not magnanimous."<sup>26</sup> Thus, Aristotle reserves humility or "lowliness" for the weak and the small, and, by this distinction, he characterizes humility as evidently not a quality of the great-souled man.

I think that St. Thomas also implicitly acknowledges Aristotle's characterization of humility as a virtue for weak, inferior men in the third and fourth objections in the first article of his question on humility. Here the objector wonders whether humility ought to be called a virtue at all, since "it would seem that humility belongs to the imperfect," and thus it cannot be a virtue.<sup>27</sup> He further acknowledges the apparent contradiction between the acts of magnanimity, humility in the third objection, which is that magnanimity pursues great things, and humility flees from them.<sup>28</sup> On Aristotle's account, the magnanimous man cannot also be humble, for he is not worthy of small things, but of the highest position and honor among men. Further, insofar as humility subjects man to other men, "how an exceedingly virtuous person, a magnanimous

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<sup>24</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.31-1125a.2 (Leon 47.2:232).

<sup>25</sup> DeYoung, 215.

<sup>26</sup> NE 4.8.1123b.5-6 (Leon. 47.2:225).

<sup>27</sup> "Virtus est dispositio perfecti . . . Sed humilitas videtur esse imperfectorum: unde et Deo non convenit humiliari, qui nulli subiici potest. Ergo videtur quod humilitas non sit virtus." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, arg. 4 (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>28</sup> "Nulla virtus opponitur alii virtuti. Sed humilitas videtur opponi virtuti magnanimitatis, quae tendit in magna, humilitas autem ipsa refugit. Ergo videtur quod humilitas non sit virtus." Ibid., a. 1, arg. 3 (Leon. 10:292).

individual, could do so without untruthfulness, hypocrisy or flattery — vices all — is most difficult to conceive.”<sup>29</sup> Aristotle is clear that it is incumbent upon the magnanimous man to disdain small things as beneath his greatness of soul. Thus, magnanimity is incompatible with humility by Aristotle’s account.

## 2. St. Thomas’s Transposition of Magnanimity

In the present Section 2, I will present St. Thomas’s exposition of magnanimity (Part ii) and his reading of Aristotle on the virtue of humility (Part iii). Before doing so, I will briefly summarize, in Part i, where he places this virtue within his whole schema of the virtues. As with the virtue of humility, St Thomas considers the virtue of magnanimity is a moral virtue, and, furthermore, as a part of fortitude.

### *i. St. Thomas’s Placement of Magnanimity among the Parts of Fortitude*

Just as humility is not about the most rudimentary operations of man’s nature, so too, magnanimity is also not about what is most basic to man, and, hence, neither virtue is a cardinal virtue. As St. Thomas describes it, “the more difficult it is in something arduous to remain firm, the more principal is the virtue which makes the mind firm in that matter.”<sup>30</sup> Though fortitude is the virtue that moderates the most basic desire of man to preserve his own life in the face of danger of death, the virtue of magnanimity is about man’s more peripheral desire for superiority. Therefore, fortitude’s moderation of man’s desire to preserve his life is more difficult than magnanimity’s moderation of his desire for superiority. This is because “as a man loves his life

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<sup>29</sup> Keys, “Aquinas,” 53.

<sup>30</sup> “Et ideo quanto difficilius est in aliquo arduo firmiter se habere, tanto principalior est virtus quae circa illud firmitatem praestat animo. Difficilius autem est firmiter se habere in periculis mortis, in quibus confirmat animum fortitudo, quam in maximis bonis sperandis vel adipiscendis, ad quae confirmat animum magnanimitas, quia sicut homo maxime diligit vitam suam, ita maxime refugit mortis pericula.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:66).

the most, so too does he flee the danger of death more than any other,” including the difficulty of reasonably pursuing one’s own superiority.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, fortitude is the cardinal virtue, while magnanimity is considered a part of it.

Magnanimity’s identification as a part of fortitude is different from humility’s placement as a part of temperance and modesty in two respects. Firstly, and most importantly for our discussion, St. Thomas places magnanimity as a part of fortitude. Magnanimity is *not* placed as a part of fortitude because it and fortitude both reside in the same faculty of the soul, that is, the irascible appetite. Rather, magnanimity is a part of fortitude because it shares the same mode (*modus*) as fortitude, namely, “firmness of mind,” which is “chiefly praised in those virtues that tend to something difficult.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, both fortitude and magnanimity *confirm* and *sustain* their respective irascible passions.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, recall that humility chiefly *suppresses* and *restrains* the passion of hope, sharing the same mode as temperance of which it is a potential part.

The second difference between magnanimity’s identification as a part of fortitude and humility’s identification as a part of temperance is that magnanimity acts not only as a potential part, but also, in limited circumstances, as a quasi-integral part. Potential parts of fortitude are those virtues that are secondary to the principal virtue insofar as man acts by them in lesser difficulties.<sup>34</sup> This is the case with magnanimity, which “is joined with fortitude in that it confirms the mind about something arduous; however, it is deficient from fortitude insofar as it

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<sup>31</sup> ST II-II, q. 129, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:66).

<sup>32</sup> “Inter alios autem generales modos virtutis unus est firmitas animi: quia firmiter se habere requiritur in omni virtute, ut dicitur in II *Ethic*. Praecipue tamen hos laudatur in virtutibus quae in aliquod arduum tendunt, in quibus difficillimum est firmitatem servare.” Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Recall that magnanimity moderates the passion of hope and curbs despair; see Chapter One, Section 1, Part ii, p. 12-13. Fortitude moderates daring and restrains fear in the face of the danger of death; see ST II-II, q. 123, a. 3 (Leon. 10:10-11).

<sup>34</sup> See ST II-II, q. 128, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:51).

confirms that mind in a matter in which it is easier to persevere.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, magnanimity functions as a potential part of fortitude. Also, however, whenever acts of magnanimity or firmness of mind in the pursuit of great and honorable undertakings “are confined to the proper matter of fortitude, namely, to the danger of death, magnanimity is a quasi-integral part of fortitude, for without it there can be no fortitude.”<sup>36</sup> Recall that integral parts are virtues that are necessary for a perfect act of a cardinal virtue. The act of a quasi-integral part is a necessary condition for the act of another virtue; however, it is “quasi” because it is not itself the virtue which attains the good, but rather another virtue’s condition.<sup>37</sup> St. Thomas says then that magnanimity is necessary in circumstances where the danger of death is immanent in the same action by which some great good is to be accomplished, for example, in the case of a firefighter rushing into a burning building to save a child, in which danger of death is clearly immanent. In this act, the firefighter’s virtue of magnanimity acts as a quasi-integral part of the virtue of fortitude insofar as magnanimity is necessary to carry out so honorable a deed, namely, the act of saving the child

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<sup>35</sup> “Sic ergo patet quod magnanimitas convenit cum fortitudine in quantum confirmat animum circa aliquid arduum: deficit autem ab ea in hoc firmat animum in eo circa quod facilius est firmitatem servare.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:66). See also ST II-II, q. 128, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:51).

<sup>36</sup> St. Thomas conflates confidence and magnanimity in this passage, writing that what the Philosopher calls “magnanimity” seems to be “confidence” as it is described by Cicero early in St. Thomas’s reply. I will give a lengthier quotation here in order to show how St. Thomas describes the integral parts, including magnanimity or confidence: “Ad actum autem aggrediendi duo requiruntur. Quorum primum pertinet ad animi praeparationem, ut scilicet aliquis promptum animum habeat ad aggrediendum. Et quantum ad hoc ponit Tullius fiduciam. Unde dicit quod fiducia est per quam magnis et honestis rebus multum ipse animus in se fiduciae cum spe collocavit. Secundum autem pertinet ad operis executionem: ne scilicet aliquis deficiat in executione illorum quae fiducialiter inchoavit. Et quantum ad hoc ponit Tullius magnificentiam . . . Haec ergo duo, si coarcentur ad propriam materiam fortitudinis, scilicet ad pericula mortis, erunt quasi partes integrales ipsius, sine quibus fortitudo esse non potest. Si autem referantur ad aliquas alias materias in quibus est minus difficultatis, erunt virtutes distinctae a fortitudine secundum speciem, tamen adiungentur ei sicut secundarium principali, sicut magnificentia a Philosopho, in IV *Ethic.*, ponitur circa magnos sumptus; magnanimitas autem, quae videtur idem esse fiduciae, circa magnos honores.” ST II-II, q. 128, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:51).

<sup>37</sup> See *Scriptum Super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* (=Sent.) lib. III, d. 33, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, c., vol. 3, pg. 1073 (=3:1073), ed. M. F. Moos, O.P., (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1956) where St. Thomas explains the distinction of a quasi-integral part: “Uno enim modo assignantur ei partes quasi integrales, cum scilicet partes virtutis alicujus ponuntur aliqua quae exiguntur ad virtutem, in quibus perfectio virtutis consistit; et hae partes, proprie loquendo, non nominant per se virtutes, sed conditiones unius virtutis integrantes ipsam. Alio modo per modum partium subjectivarum; et sic partes illae nominant quidem virtutes, et ad invicem distinctas, sed non quidem a toto, cujus partes assignantur, quia illud de eis praedicatur.”

from death. Meanwhile, it is in pursuit of this great good that the virtue of fortitude is essential to this act since it moderates the passion of daring and curbs fear regarding the risk to the firefighter's own life. Thus, magnanimity correlates with fortitude, supporting the man's brave act, which risks his own life in order save the child, a deed deserving high honor.

Like humility, then, magnanimity is also a moral virtue and a potential part of a cardinal virtue that disposes the sensible appetite. However, unlike humility, magnanimity is a part of fortitude, since it confirms and strengthens the passion of hope, which is in the irascible appetite. Further, magnanimity functions as a potential part of fortitude, in most cases, through its pursuit of great things, but may function as an integral part of fortitude when this pursuit corresponds with grave danger of death.

#### *ii. St. Thomas's Formulation of the Magnanimous Man*

Having discussed St. Thomas's placement of magnanimity among the virtues and differentiated its placement from that of humility, I would like to turn now to St. Thomas's characterization of the magnanimous man, which is influenced by his study of Aristotle's characterization. St. Thomas studies Aristotle's portrayal of magnanimity in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and he further develops his own characterization of this virtue in the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. Both Keys and Hoffmann note the many ways in which St. Thomas glosses the problematic features of the magnanimous man in Aristotle's portrait, not rejecting these characteristics completely, but on the contrary, "putting them consistently in a good light."<sup>38</sup> For example, the contempt of the magnanimous man is a sign of his appropriate evaluation of men, since he justly despises the wicked and praises the virtuous.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Hoffmann, 124. See also Hoffmann, 124-26 and Keys, "Aquinas," 41-47.

<sup>39</sup> See *Sententia libri Ethicorum* (SLE), vol. 47.2, pg. 232, lines 138-43, (=Leon. 47.2:232.138-43) of *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed. (Rome, 1969).

St. Thomas clarifies further in the *Summa*, explaining, “magnanimity holds others in contempt insofar as they fall off from the gifts of God.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, his contempt is righteous, and based on truth.

In addition, in his commentary, he softens Aristotle’s remark that the magnanimous man forgets benefits by adding that he does not do so *by choice*, but rather *by disposition*.<sup>41</sup> In the *Summa*, St. Thomas makes further surprising claims. He explains that, not only his being unmindful of favors, but also his other unseemly characteristics, such as his inability to be with others,<sup>42</sup> “pertain not to blame, but to exceeding praise,” insofar “as they are characteristic of the magnanimous man.”<sup>43</sup> St. Thomas does not say that these characteristics are not blameworthy absolutely, but only that they are not so when they refer to the magnanimous man, whose prevailing position among others “in the realms of action . . . is one of extraordinary superiority.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, his apparent ingratitude is transformed into super exceeding gratitude, since “it is not pleasing to him that he accept favors from others, *unless he repay them with a greater favor*; this belongs to the perfection of gratitude, in the act of which he desires to excel, as in the acts of other virtues.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, St Thomas transposes the apparent base ingratitude of the

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<sup>40</sup> “Similiter etiam magnanimitas contemnit alios secundum quod deficiunt a donis Dei.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:62).

<sup>41</sup> “Et haec quidem proprietas non est ex electione magnanimi et consequitur ex dispositione ipsius; ita enim est dispositus magnanimus ut delectetur beneficia dare, invitus autem beneficia recipiat.” SLE, Leon. 47.2:234.61-65. See also Keys, “Aquinas,” 46 ,where she argues that this comment gives the magnanimous man the “benefit of the doubt.” However, it does not exonerate him fully or even show how this characteristic could be virtuous, since it is by “choices” that he has formed this “disposition,” given Aristotle’s description of the acquisition of virtue. Thus, his dispositions “still appear to reflect a partial vision of human flourishing,” one that is manifestly rejecting his own human dependence on others. Therefore, St. Thomas adds further clarification of these negative characteristics by linking them to superexceeding virtue.

<sup>42</sup> See ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, arg. 5 (Leon. 10:61).

<sup>43</sup> “Proprietates illae, secundum quod ad magnanimum pertinent, non sunt vituperabiles, sed superexcedenter laudabiles.” Ibid., a. 3, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:62).

<sup>44</sup> Hoffmann, 125.

<sup>45</sup> “Quod magnanimus non habet in memoria a quibus beneficia recipit, intelligendum est quantum ad hoc quod non est sibi delectabile quod ab aliquibus beneficia recipat, *quin sibi maiora recompenset*. Quod pertinent ad perfectionem gratitudinis, in cuius actu vult superexcellere, sicut et in actibus aliarum virtutum.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 5 (Leon. 10:63), emphasis mine.

magnanimous man insofar as he places these actions into a sphere of a paradoxically *greater* gratitude, not lesser. In this way, St. Thomas attempts to, not only reconcile to virtue what seems to be inconsistent with virtue in the magnanimous man, but also to show how these characteristics, in fact, pertain to the greatest of virtues, thus preserving Aristotle's exposition of magnanimity as the "crown of the virtues."

How does St. Thomas correct the self-sufficiency of Aristotle's magnanimous man? St. Thomas says that "magnanimity regards two things: honor, which is its matter, and doing something great, which is its end."<sup>46</sup> Since honor is the matter of magnanimity and not its end, St. Thomas, maintaining the spirit of Aristotle, is able to clarify how it is that magnanimity is about honor, and yet explain how the magnanimous man does not give much importance to it. As St. Thomas describes it: "Magnanimity is about honor, as evidently he strives to do those things which are worthy of honor, however, not so that he may esteem too greatly the honors of man."<sup>47</sup> Hoffmann points out that by stressing doing things that are worthy of honor rather than honor itself as the end of magnanimity, St. Thomas shifts the attention from receiving the adulation of other men who are worthy of bestowing honor to the "self-recognition of one's abilities."<sup>48</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, the formal motive, the special good which is the end

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<sup>46</sup> "Magnanimitas ad duo respicit: ad honorem quidem sicut ad materiam; sed ad aliquid magnum operandum sicut ad finem." ST II-II, q. 129, a. 8, c. (Leon. 10:68). See Hoffmann, 119-21, for a discussion of the clarifying power of St. Thomas's definition, which assigns honor as the matter and great works as the end. His distinction gives a "unity to a number of seemingly unrelated topics in Aristotle" and clarifies how it is that magnanimity can make each virtue greater. To clarify my use of terms, that which Hoffmann calls the "object," I am referring to as the matter *circa quam* of the virtue of magnanimity, and what Hoffman calls the "end," I am referring to as the formal motive. The passion of hope is the immediate matter *circa quam* of magnanimity and honor is mediate matter *circa quam*.

<sup>47</sup> "Et hoc modo magnanimitas est circa honorem: ut videlicet studeat facere ea quae sunt honore digna, non tamen sic ut pro magno aestimet humanum honorem." ST II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:58).

<sup>48</sup> Hoffmann, 120.

of a magnanimous man's action, is the reasonable pursuit of his own superiority, since he is competent or worthy of great goods because of his gifts from God.<sup>49</sup>

DeYoung further argues that St. Thomas's account of magnanimity adjusts the measure of comparison from the horizontal to the vertical plane. The key difference in his account is his insistence that human beings are fundamentally in relation with and dependent upon God.<sup>50</sup>

"Magnanimity makes man deem himself worthy of great things, *considering the gifts which he possesses from God.*"<sup>51</sup> Thus, St. Thomas preserves one of the essential characteristics of Aristotle's magnanimous man, that his magnanimity is based on the truth about himself, that he not only believes himself worthy, but also is indeed worthy of what is great. However, St. Thomas brings forth a notion of the truth that is far richer than that which Aristotle had acknowledged in his text: the truth that is manifested, not by man's looking outward toward his fellowmen, but by looking upward toward the Creator, from Whom he has received his own gifts.

Also, Keys points out that St. Thomas's account of the magnanimous man not only acknowledges man's dependence on God, but also explicitly acknowledges man's dependence as a social creature on others.<sup>52</sup> For Aristotle, human virtue is dependent on a good upbringing within family and city, and is upheld by good laws.<sup>53</sup> Though Aristotle does not explicitly say that the magnanimous man acknowledges this debt, it may be inferred from qualifying remarks that he adds to statements he makes about his self-sufficiency, such as that the magnanimous man is "in need of nothing, *or hardly anything.*"<sup>54</sup> St. Thomas, however, is far more explicit in

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter One, Section I, Part ii, p. 13-15.

<sup>50</sup> DeYoung, 219.

<sup>51</sup> "Magnanimitas igitur facit quod homo se magnis dignificet *secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo.*" ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:63), emphasis mine.

<sup>52</sup> Keys, "Aquinas," 48-49.

<sup>53</sup> NE 1.4.1095b.1-9 (Leon. 47.1:13), 2.1.1103b.24-25 (Leon. 47.1:76).

<sup>54</sup> NE 4.10.1124b.17-18 (Leon. 47.2:232). See also DeYoung, 217 and Holloway, 595.

his alignment of magnanimity with social dependency. In article six, he replies to an objector who remarks that the magnanimous man is self-sufficient and thus has no need of confidence by saying that, “it is above man to need nothing at all. For every man needs first, Divine help, but, secondly, even human assistance, since man is naturally a social animal, for *he is insufficient by himself to provide for his own life.*”<sup>55</sup> While preserving and further clarifying the superiority of the magnanimous man, which is based in the truth, St. Thomas also exchanges the self-sufficiency and independence of Aristotle’s account for a twofold acknowledged dependence upon God and neighbor that remains compatible with greatness of soul.<sup>56</sup>

### *iii. St. Thomas’s Reading of Aristotle on Humility*

Finally, St. Thomas’s most radical departure from Aristotle is his characterization of humility and magnanimity at paired virtues. Not only does his account emphasize the complementarity between the two, but it also stresses that magnanimity *requires* humility. This discussion will follow in the final section of this chapter, but I would like argue here that St. Thomas seems to have recognized an inchoate version of the virtue of humility in Aristotle’s account of magnanimity. As mentioned above, there are two places where Aristotle discusses the lowly.<sup>57</sup> Concerning his second remark that the “lowly are flatterers,” St. Thomas, in his commentary, simply glosses over this statement, and he does not mention it at all in the *Summa Theologiae*. In the commentary, he states briefly that this description does not apply to those

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<sup>55</sup> “Hoc enim est supra hominem, ut omnino nullo indigeat. Indiget enim omnis homo, primo quidem, divino auxilio: secundario autem etiam auxilio humano, quia homo est naturaliter animal sociale, *eo quod sibi non sufficit ad vitam.*” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:66), emphasis mine.

<sup>56</sup> See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2009), 119-128 on the virtues of acknowledged dependence. See also Keys, “Aquinas,” 47-65, DeYoung, 214-23, and Boyd, 256-60 for discussions of magnanimity and humility as virtues which must begin with an acknowledgement of man’s dependence upon others (God or other men).

<sup>57</sup> See Chapter Two, Section 1, Part ii, p. 46-47.

who are humble simply, but rather applies to “all people who are humble *and are abject in soul* are flatterers.”<sup>58</sup>

However, St. Thomas gives Aristotle’s first remark more treatment than the second remark, both in the commentary and in the *Summa*. St. Thomas cites this first remark regarding the temperate man who is worthy of small things and holds himself rightly to small things two times in the *Summa*, once in his question on magnanimity, and once in his question on humility.<sup>59</sup> In article three of his question on magnanimity, where he asks whether magnanimity is a virtue, the second objector quotes this passing remark of Aristotle on the temperate man, characterizing this “temperance” as a virtue that is incompatible with magnanimity. Hence, according to the objector, magnanimity is not a virtue, since one may have this “temperate” virtue without having magnanimity: “Moreover, he that has one virtue has them all . . . But someone can have some virtue while not having magnanimity, for the Philosopher says in book IV of the *Ethics*, that ‘he who is worthy of small things and deems himself worthy of them is temperate, not, however, magnanimous.’ Thus, magnanimity is not a virtue.”<sup>60</sup> In replying to this objection, it might seem that it would be simplest to grant that this “temperate” virtue is, in reality, not a virtue at all. Then there would be no objection, but interestingly, St. Thomas does not say this, implying that Aristotle’s passing remark does indeed describe a virtue.

What virtue does it describe? In article four of his question on humility, St. Thomas discusses humility as a part of temperance and modesty. Here he recognizes previous classical accounts of virtues and their placement of humility as a part of temperance and modesty.

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<sup>58</sup> “Et e converso omnes humiles, *qui scilicet sunt abiecti animi*, sunt blanditores.” SLE (Leon. 47.2:235.183-84), emphasis mine.

<sup>59</sup> See ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, arg. 3 (Leon. 10:60) and q. 161, a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:299).

<sup>60</sup> “Praeterea, qui habet unam virtutem, habet omnes, ut supra habitum est. Sed aliquis potest habere aliquam virtutem non habens magnimitatem: dicit enim Philosophus, in IV *Ethic*. Quod *qui est parvis dignus, et his dignificat seipsum, temperatus est, magnanimus autem non*. Ergo magnanimitas non est virtus.” Ibid. (Leon. 10:60).

Interestingly, it is here that St. Thomas again refers to this passage from Aristotle and names the Philosopher's "temperate" virtue, humility. "Thus like meekness humility is placed as a part of temperance. Wherefore the Philosopher, in book IV of the *Ethics*, says that he who tends towards small things in proportion to his mode is not magnanimous, but temperate, which we may call humble."<sup>61</sup>

In the commentary, he says that "one who is worthy of small things and considers himself so, may be called temperate in the sense that temperance is taken for any moderation whatsoever."<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, magnanimity "consists of a certain size, as beauty properly consists in greatness of body. Thus, those who are short may be called fair by reason of lovely complexion or on account of well-proportioned members, but they are not said to be beautiful since they lack size." St. Thomas follows the text of Aristotle quite closely here, but he adds an important clarification about the sense in which Aristotle uses "temperance," namely, that it is to be taken in the sense of "any moderation whatsoever." This passing clarification, which he makes in his commentary, is significant, since it emphasizes humility's place among the virtues that operate according to the mode of restraining the desire of the appetite, and this is also the mode of the cardinal virtue of temperance.<sup>63</sup> This remark on humility's mode is emphasized further in St. Thomas's treatment of humility in the *Summa* by his consideration of humility as a potential part of temperance.

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<sup>61</sup> "Et ideo, sicut mansuetudo ponitur pars temperantiae, ita etiam humilitas. Unde et Phillosophus, in IV *Ethic.*, eum qui tendit in parva secundum suum modum, dicit non esse magnanimum, sed *temperatum*: quem nos humiliem dicere possumus." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:298).

<sup>62</sup> "Ille enim qui est dignus parvis et his se ipsum dignificat potest dici temperatus, prout temperantia large sumitur pro quacumque moderation. Non tamen potest dici magnanimum, quia magnanimitas consistit in quadam magnitudine, sicut et pulcritudo proprie consistit in copore magno; unde illi qui sunt parvi possunt dici formosi, propter decentiam coloris, et commensurate, propter debitam commensurationem membrorum, non tamen possunt dici pulcri, propter magnitudinis defectum." SLE (Leon. 47.2:226.47-57).

<sup>63</sup> See Chapter One, Section 4, Part ii, p. 32-35.

This shows that St. Thomas would disagree with some modern commentators who insist that humility is manifestly incompatible with Aristotle's account of magnanimity.<sup>64</sup> St. Thomas did not find a *rejection* of the virtue of humility within the Philosopher's work. He does, however, duly note Aristotle's reticence on this virtue.<sup>65</sup> Aristotle's passing remark does not begin to unfold the contours of the virtue of humility, and St. Thomas "shows little concern to relate his views on humility to Aristotle's teaching,"<sup>66</sup> since, as he notes, "the Philosopher intended to discuss virtues according as they are ordered to the civic life . . . Humility, however, considered as a special virtue, chiefly regards the subjection of man to God."<sup>67</sup>

### 3. The Complementarity of Humility and Magnanimity

Even given St. Thomas's transposition of Aristotle's portrait of the magnanimous man, it is not immediately evident how he might also possess humility. For example, we will see that St. Thomas insists that the magnanimous man holds his neighbor in contempt, which seems to directly contradict the subjection of man to his neighbor required by humility. The apparent contrariety must be considered. As we will see, however, not only does St. Thomas posit that these virtues are not incompatible, but in describing humility and magnanimity as paired virtues (*duplex virtus*), he implies a unique union between these virtues: "Here is Aquinas' paradox: no humility, no true or full magnanimity; no magnanimity, no true or full humility."<sup>68,69</sup> Yet, as we have seen, humility is characterized as a special virtue, as is magnanimity. So further discussion

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, John Casey, *Pagan Virtue: An Essay in Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 200, where he writes: "It goes without saying that [Aristotle] is directly opposed to Christian humility."

<sup>65</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad 5 (Leon. 10:293).

<sup>66</sup> Hoffmann, 118.

<sup>67</sup> "Philosophus intendebat agere de virtutibus secundum quod ordinantur ad vitam civilem . . . Humilitas autem, secundum quod est specialis virtus, praecipue respicit subiectionem hominis ad Deum." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad. 5 (Leon. 10:293).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 161, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>69</sup> Keys, "Humility," 218.

of the sense in which these virtues are so closely united while remaining distinct is also necessary.

This section has three parts. In Part i, I will show how St. Thomas resolves the apparent tensions among the characteristics of the magnanimous man and also between humility and magnanimity. Part ii and Part iii will discuss the role of each virtue in their united pursuit of the soul's perfection. Part ii will describe the union of the paired virtues in this pursuit, and Part iii will consider the distinctions between the two virtues' actions in this pursuit.

*i. Resolution of Apparent Contradictions in the Virtues' Characteristics*

In his very first article on the question of humility, St. Thomas asks whether humility is a virtue. The third objector points out the apparent contradiction between humility and magnanimity, since magnanimity pursues great things and humility flees them.<sup>70</sup> Thus, humility cannot be a virtue, since it is opposed to the virtue of magnanimity. St. Thomas, through this objection, acknowledges from the outset, the apparent contradiction of humility and magnanimity. He then spends the body of his response in distinguishing humility from magnanimity. In Chapter One, I highlighted the similarity between these virtues in the matter *circa quam* since both virtues are immediately about the passion of hope and mediately about the arduous good (*bonum arduum*) of what is great.<sup>71</sup> However, both virtues pursue what is great from different perspectives, by considering of what degree of superiority this particular man is truly worthy. That which is great for the magnanimous man is honor, and that which is so for the

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<sup>70</sup> ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, arg. 3 (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 161, a. 4, ad. 3 (10:299).

humble man are all things. Thus, magnanimity is said to be mediately about honor, while humility is mediately about all things.<sup>72</sup>

Both magnanimity and humility further share a similar formal object since both *moderate* the passion of hope, although magnanimity does so primarily by confirming it, while humility does so primarily by restraining it.<sup>73</sup> As previously discussed, virtue generally moderates according to a particular mode. Magnanimity, for the most part, supports the soul in pursuit of the difficult good, while humility, usually, restrains it from this pursuit.<sup>74</sup> Further, he emphasizes that both magnanimity and humility dispose man to act according to right reason.<sup>75,76</sup>

The essential distinction between humility and magnanimity is the difference in their formal motives. Magnanimity pursues what is great things in view of attaining one's own good, while humility flees them out of reverence for God.<sup>77</sup> St. Thomas explains that:

Magnanimity makes man deem himself worthy of what is great in consideration of the gifts that he possesses from God. If he has great virtue in his soul, magnanimity makes him tend toward perfect works of virtue . . . Humility, however, makes man think himself little considering his defects. Likewise, magnanimity holds others in contempt insofar as they have fallen away from the gifts of God, for it does not esteem others so highly that he does wrong for them. But humility honors others, and sees them as superior, insofar as it sees in others the gifts of God . . . *Thus, it follows that magnanimity and humility are not contrary, although they seem to be contrary, they proceed according to different considerations.*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See ST II-II, q. 129, a. 1, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:58); ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, c. (Leon. 10:300); Chapter One, Section 1, Part i, p. 10-11; Chapter Two, Section 2, Part ii, p. 52.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter One, Section 1, Parts ii, p. 12-13.

<sup>74</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, c. and ad. 3 (Leon. 10:292).

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:293).

<sup>76</sup> For a summary comparison between magnanimity and humility, see Appendix, p. 97.

<sup>77</sup> ST II-II, q. 162, a. 3, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:316).

<sup>78</sup> "Magnanimitas igitur facit quod homo se magnis dignificet secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo: sicut, si habet magnam virtutem animi, magnanimitas facit quod ad perfecta opera virtutis tendat . . . Humilitas autem facit quod homo seipsum parvipendat secundum considerationem proprii defectus. Similiter etiam magnanimitas contemnit alios secundum quod deficiunt a donis Dei: non enim tantum alios appetiatur quod pro eis aliquid indecens faciat. Sed humilitas alios honorat, et superiores aestimat, in quantum in eis aliquid inspicit de donis Dei . . . *Et sic patet quod magnanimitas et humilitas non sunt contraria, quamvis in contraria tendere videantur: quia procedunt secundum diversas considerationes.*" ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:62), emphasis mine.

The key differences between humility and magnanimity is in the perspective of reason and the “considerations” by which each proceeds in activity. That both are grounded in reason is essential to them as virtues, but humility looks at self as deficient when compared to God, while magnanimity looks at self as bearing God’s gifts within his soul and, thus, made capable by those gifts. The contempt of the magnanimous man and the self-abasement of the humble man no longer appear as contradictory, but rather as proceeding according to two different motives and based on two different reasonable perspectives. But these two different motives seem distinct enough to keep one man from being both humble and magnanimous. It seems that one cannot proceed by both considerations in the same action.

While at first it may appear that these motives cannot operate together in action, further investigation shows that St. Thomas does not think so. St. Thomas points out that a man’s perfection in virtue is only perfect in a relative sense, such that, in comparison with God, his perfection is still found wanting.<sup>79</sup> Hence, even though the magnanimous man excels in virtue, having reached a natural perfection, nevertheless, insofar as he sees himself before God, Whose perfection is absolute, even the magnanimous man must proceed humbly. This does not answer, however, the question of how it is possible for a virtuous man to simultaneously regard another man with contempt and self-abasement. Even this, however, becomes possible when two things in man are considered: that which is of God (His gifts) and that which is of man himself (his sins). Recall that to satisfy humility, a man must regard that which he is of himself (i.e. nothing) as inferior to the gifts of God in another. On the other hand, a magnanimous man considers another’s failure to *use* his gifts from God properly (i.e. his sins) with contempt; but St. Thomas does not say that this consideration is incompatible with humility. Further, such contempt serves

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<sup>79</sup> ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad. 4 (Leon. 10:293).

as protection of a man's virtue insofar as "he does not esteem others so highly that he does wrong for them."<sup>80</sup> Therefore, a man may despise another according to his sins and simultaneously revere him according to the gifts of God in him.

*ii. The Unity of the Virtues in the Reasonable Pursuit of Superiority and Man's Perfection*

So far, although I have tried to show how magnanimity and humility are compatible, I have yet to show how they might actually be interconnected, such that these virtues "increase together like the five fingers of the hand so that one cannot have a profound humility without true nobility of soul."<sup>81</sup> The answer lies in the pursuit of man's perfection. Magnanimity's resolve in the pursuit of great things insofar as they are worthy of honor is also a pursuit of his own perfection, since what is great is truly *proportionate to him*. St. Thomas writes that, "[the magnanimous man] tends to what is greater *according to reason*, for he considers himself worthy of that which is *proportionate to his worth* . . . since he does not extend himself beyond his own dignity."<sup>82</sup> Thus, the way in which the magnanimous man pursues perfection is by his pursuit of great things of which he is truly worthy. In fact, he *ought* to pursue such things because God has created him to be worthy of them; thus, his pursuit of superiority marks his reverence for his gifts and for his vocation, both given by God.

Surprisingly, St. Thomas says that humility also supports the pursuit of superiority; however, how it does so is not immediately evident. After all, the mode of humility is to restrain man's appetite from the pursuit of superiority because of its formal motive, namely, reverence for God. Yet humility's restraint from the pursuit of superiority is not demanded in all

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 9.

<sup>82</sup> ". . . ad ea quae sunt maxima, secundum rationem tendi; eo enim quod *secundum dignitatem* seipsum dignificat, ut ibidem dicitur, quia scilicet se non extendit ad maiora quam dignus est." ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:62), emphasis mine.

circumstances and is secondary to its formal object (moderation of hope).<sup>83</sup> Humility, out of reverence for God, restrains man “lest he pursue superiority *inordinately*.”<sup>84</sup> The pursuit of superiority is not always inordinate, however, and in fact, pursuing the superior position to which he is called remains an obligation precisely for the humble man, out of that same reverence for God Who bids him to it. St. Thomas says that when the humble man remembers God and places his confidence in Him, then he holds fast in the pursuit of the position in the order of creation appropriate to his personal perfection. “To tend toward what is superior out of confidence in one’s own power is contrary to humility. But to tend to what is superior out of confidence in Divine assistance, this is not contrary to humility, particularly since the more one subjects himself to God out of humility, the more one is exalted in God.”<sup>85</sup> This exaltation in God is the pinnacle of perfection for man.

Here we see the unity of the two virtues, that they both pursue the perfection of man by pursuing superiority *reasonably*. Further, both orient man toward his own perfection through confidence, not in himself, but in God. By magnanimity, he looks to God’s gifts that he sees in himself, while by humility, he trusts in Divine aid, which will buoy up his weakness. Thus, humility and magnanimity unite man’s gaze upon God as he approaches the perfection to which God calls him. By humility, the virtuous man sees himself completely dependent upon Divine assistance insofar as he considers what he is of himself, which is nothing at all, while by magnanimity, he simultaneously understands that he is the steward of God’s tremendous gifts, which are given precisely to be used in the pursuit of his own perfection.<sup>86</sup> Thus, both virtues

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<sup>83</sup> See Chapter One, Section 1, Part ii, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> “ne scilicet in propriam excellentiam inordinate tendat.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:307).

<sup>85</sup> “Tendere in aliqua maiora ex propriarum virium confidentia, humilitati contrariatur. Sed quod aliquis ex confidentia divini auxilii in maiora tendat, hoc non est contra humilitatem: praesertim cum ex hoc aliquis magis apud Deum exaltetur quod ei se magis per humilitatem subiicit.” ST II-II q. 161, a. 2, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:295).

<sup>86</sup> See DeYoung, 221-22.

together are necessary for the virtuous man to evidence the whole splendid truth about himself in relation to God: that he is indeed lowly, but called to greatness.

St. Thomas clarifies further the apparently paradoxical correlation of humility and the pursuit of superiority by his distinction between the vice of pusillanimity and the virtue of humility. While pusillanimity is opposed to magnanimity properly, since it is deficiency in the pursuit of what is great, it is also opposed to humility “as a defect” (*secundum defectum*), if the term is taken to name the vice of “the mind’s [inordinate] attachment to things beneath what is becoming to a man, since each proceeds from smallness of soul.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, pusillanimity is based on an “attachment” of the mind that rescinds from the right rule of reason by aiming at things beneath one. Along with “fear of failure in what one falsely estimates to exceed one’s ability,” pusillanimity is caused by “ignorance of one’s own condition.”<sup>88</sup> St. Thomas’s distinction between this vice and humility centers around the clarity of reason’s grasp of who man is and that to which he is called to, given his particular gifts.

If man is called to a particular perfection by God, then, St. Thomas insists that, to content himself with what is below his talents simply to avoid the arduousness of pursuing the stature to which he is competent is not at all a manifestation of the virtue of humility, but of the vice of pusillanimity. Humility, rather, *supports* man’s reasonable pursuit of superiority. As Foley points out, St. Thomas’s characterization of humility rejects the unreasonable self-contempt and self-abasement that grow from distorted and false conceptions of self, since he, in fact, views this virtue as moderation of the “mind’s movement towards some excellence.”<sup>89</sup> Foley explains that

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<sup>87</sup> “Pusillanimitas autem, si importet defectum a prosecutio magnorum, proprie opponitur magnanimitati per modum defectus; si autem importet applicationem animi ad aliqua viliora quam hominem deceant, opponetur humilitati secundum defectum; utrumque enim ex animi parvitate procedit.” ST II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:311).

<sup>88</sup> “Alio modo potest considerari ex parte suae causae: quae ex parte intellectus, est ignorantia propriae conditionis; ex parte autem appetitus, est timor deficendi in his quae falso aestimat excedere suam facultatem.” ST II-II, q. 133, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:87).

<sup>89</sup> Foley, 406. See also ST II-II, q. 160, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:290).

humility's "restraint paradoxically enables the mind to *better* reach the excellence it seeks," since "it prevents that pursuit from becoming sabotaged by a delusional, counterproductive self-regard" either in excess (pride) or deficiency (pusillanimity).<sup>90</sup> Thus, together magnanimity and humility guide man's pursuit of his own perfection.

### *iii. Distinction in Action of the Virtues in the Pursuit of Man's Perfection*

Both virtues are necessary and complementary dispositions in the soul in the pursuit of one's perfection, yet each is the principle of distinctive acts. Since humility is the foundation of the spiritual life, Carlson argues that frequent acts of humility are necessary for all people for their eternal salvation. The mediate matter *circa quam* of humility is all things, insofar as even small things are superior to the lowly man. However, since magnanimity is about the highest of great things, namely, honor, and, since the pursuit of such things must be in proportion to the gifts of God in each particular man, some may not have occasion to act from the virtue of magnanimity. This does not, however, mean that a man without gifts proportionate to greatness of soul does not have the virtue of magnanimity in his soul, but only that his magnanimity does not facilitate concrete actions in pursuit of what is great. If the circumstances should change, and this man should find himself capable of the highest things through new graces and gifts from God, he ought to pursue them, and to fail to do so would be pusillanimity. St. Thomas addresses this in article three in his question on magnanimity, where he says that not everyone is competent to carry out *acts* of all the virtues, even though *dispositions* for all virtue reside together in the soul.<sup>91</sup> "Hence the act of magnanimity is not becoming for every virtuous man, but only for great men . . . Thus it is possible for someone to whom a magnanimous act is not becoming to

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<sup>90</sup> Foley, 406.

<sup>91</sup> ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:62).

have the habit of magnanimity through which he is disposed to carry out such an act if it pertained to him according to his state.”<sup>92</sup> Carlson argues that even in the case of *philotimia*, the virtue which moderates hope regarding doing things worthy of lesser honors, there may be certain souls for whom even acts deserving small honors are not proportionate.<sup>93</sup>

The question then presents itself, “how can a man decide that, in general, his attitude toward life should be one of endeavor to perform great deeds for the Church or society, or one of self-effacement and contentment with circumstances as they are?”<sup>94</sup> The key for this discernment is self-knowledge before God. No matter how a man pursues his perfection, he always does so in proportion to those gifts that Providence has provided him and in accordance to that way of life to which God has called him to by his vocation. Thus, man looks to past experiences of success and struggle, revelations of his gifts and talents brought forth by various circumstances, goods into which he has been born or which he has attained in life, such as wealth, educational possibilities, social position, and family, and seeks always before God in sincerity and humility to know the individual “way” which he is called to follow through his actions. “Thus even in the practical problems of daily life, self-knowledge assists in making choices between magnanimity or *philotimia* accompanied by humility, or humility alone retreating out of reverence for God from what is above its measure.”<sup>95</sup> The truth of this is made evident in the wide variety of “ways” chosen by the saints in their pursuit of holiness, from the great king, St. Louis, to the hidden contemplative, St. Thérèse. The firm alliance between humility and magnanimity makes a great variety of particular human souls possible, for the great

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<sup>92</sup> “Unde actus magnanimitatis non competit cuilibet virtuoso, sed solum magnis . . . Et sic potest aliquis cui non competit actus magnanimitatis, habere magnanimitatis habitum, per quem scilicet disponitur ad talem actum exequendum si sibi secundum statum suum competeret.” ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 2 (Leon. 10:62).

<sup>93</sup> Carlson, 384-386. See ST I-II, q. 60, a. 5, c. (Leon. 6:391-392) and ST II-II q. 129, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:59) for St. Thomas’s characterization of *philotimia*.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

and the small are alike in the pursuit of perfection. Both the powerful man and the lowly man may have these virtues; in fact, they must have these good habits of the soul, so that they are prepared to choose in each new circumstance the action proportionate to their particular gifts they have as a unique human being before God. Thus, in each action, a man, grounded in self-knowledge and formed by the virtues of magnanimity and humility, evidences the brilliant truths about his own goodness, namely, that it is from God, and about his absolute weakness, namely, that is strengthened and transformed by God.

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### *CHAPTER THREE: HUMILITY AS AN ACQUIRED AND AS AN INFUSED VIRTUE*

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In this thesis, I have discussed how St. Thomas both characterizes humility as a special virtue and pairs it with a virtue that at first appeared to be an unsuitable match, magnanimity. Thus far, through the working out of its form and matter, placement among the virtues, and complementarity to magnanimity, the humble man appears as both illuminating and paradoxical. He illuminates insofar as his actions bespeak the reality that he knows, namely, that God is and he is not. Meanwhile, he is paradoxical, since he regards himself as wholly deficient in the pursuit of what is great, while, at the same time, he reasonably pursues perfection. In this chapter, in order to understand more completely St. Thomas's portrait of the humble man, it is necessary to take up the question of how humility is an acquired virtue, and how it is also an infused virtue. Through the exploration of these two analogous virtues of humility, my aim is to show how they are wholly different in kind, and that they reflect a radically different understanding of man's relation to God. This is ultimately because the naturally humble man and the supernaturally humble man each participate to a radically different degree in their respective relationships with God.

In this chapter, there are three sections. Section 1 will flesh out St. Thomas's distinction between acquired virtues and infused virtues, in general. In Section 2, I will argue that there is both an acquired virtue of humility and an infused virtue. In the final section, Section 3, I will make three distinctions with respect to the two virtues of humility: between their principles, between the rule of the intellect, which guides their actions, and between their means.

## 1. St. Thomas's Distinction between the Acquired and the Infused Virtues

In this section, I will examine the distinction, which St. Thomas makes, in general, between the acquired and the infused virtues in order to then describe the distinction, which, I am proposing, he makes, in particular, between the acquired and the infused virtue of humility. Part i of this section lays out St. Thomas's account of the acquired virtues and of the infused virtues, highlighting the distinctions and the similarities between these two kinds of virtue. Part ii describes two central claims that are essential in making the distinction between an acquired and an infused virtue. I will use these two claims as guides for distinguishing between the acquired and the infused virtue of humility in Section 3 of this chapter.

### *i. St. Thomas's Account of the Acquired Virtues and of the Infused Virtues*

St. Thomas makes an important distinction in his treatment of virtues, which is essential for grasping his understanding of virtue in general. His distinction between acquired and infused virtues is a departure from Aristotle that arises because of the life of grace opened to us by Christ's Redemption. Romanus Cessario writes, "The infused moral virtues assume that God has acted in human history in such a way as to make beatific fellowship with himself possible for every member of the human race."<sup>1</sup> Such fellowship with God is beyond the imagination of Aristotle. The Philosopher's understanding, that human nature is oriented to a natural human happiness, is central to his account of virtue. Aristotle's definition of virtue is "a habit concerned with choice, lying in a mean that is relative to us, this being determined by reason, as the wise man would determine it."<sup>2</sup> Virtues are cultivated by repeated acts that attain the proper mean

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<sup>1</sup> Cessario, O.P., *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 106.

<sup>2</sup> "Est ergo virtus habitus electivus in medietate existens quae ad nos determinata ratione et ut utique sapiens determinabit." NE 2.7.1106b.36-1107a.2 (Leon 47.1:97).

according to circumstances for each individual. The appetites are thus shaped over time to be disposed to act rightly, easily and pleurably. Aristotle describes this shaping of the human appetites as akin to the training undergone by musicians and craftsman, since virtuous men are also formed over time by habituation and by consistent activities that form this “second nature” in them.<sup>3</sup> Further, the object of virtue is the good, since virtue is in accord with reason, as “the wise man would determine it.”<sup>4</sup>

St. Thomas also acknowledges that virtues are the shaping of the soul through repeated acts and in accordance with right reason. Further, St. Thomas adds that the virtues spring from the natural principles of both knowledge and action and from the natural orientation of the will toward the good.<sup>5</sup> These natural principles and orientation of the will St. Thomas calls “inchoate” virtues or “aptitudes” for acquiring the perfect habits that are the virtues. Unlike the active natural powers such as sight and hearing, which are already by nature determined to their acts, the rational powers that are also proper to man are not determined to any particular act, but rather are inclined to many.<sup>6</sup> They exist as the “nurseries of virtue which are in us by nature,” but have yet to be shaped into the virtuous habits that govern our actions.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the formation of virtue occurs when these aptitudes are perfected by human acts in accordance with right reason. As these virtues are formed in the soul’s powers, these powers are perfected, not only insofar as a man chooses the good once or even several times, but also as these powers themselves become good by being so habituated to the good that man acts with uniformity, promptness, and pleasure in the accomplishment of good acts.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See NE 2.1.1103b.6-22 (Leon. 47.1:75-76).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See ST I-II, q. 63, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:406-7).

<sup>6</sup> See ST I-II, q. 55, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:349).

<sup>7</sup> “seminalia virtutum insunt nobis a natura” ST I-II, q. 63, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:406-7).

<sup>8</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *De Virtutibus in Communi*, vol. 2, pg. 708-709 (=2:708-9) of *Quaestiones Disputatae* (=DQVComm), a. 1, c., ed. E. Odetto, (Rome: Marietti, 1949). All translations of *Quaestiones*

Thus, St. Thomas agrees with Aristotle that the formation of these virtues, for which man has a natural aptitude, occurs by repeated human acts: “Human virtue directed to good, which is defined according to right reason, can be caused by human acts.”<sup>9</sup> These Aristotelian virtues are the acquired virtues.<sup>10</sup> St. Thomas distinguishes these acquired virtues from the infused virtues, which are “wholly from without,” and which Aristotle could not have had without Christ’s grace and Christian Revelation.<sup>11</sup> The theological virtues are habits in the soul that direct man to his supernatural end. The theological virtues are a different kind of virtue since their object is God, and they are infused entirely by God; hence, they do not arise from human actions.<sup>12</sup> The theological virtues thus serve as principles in the life of grace:

Because [supernatural] beatitude exceeds the capacity of human nature, the natural principles of man, from which he is able to do good acts according to his capacity, are not sufficient to order man to this beatitude. Therefore, it is necessary that additional principles be added to man by God, through which he be ordered to supernatural beatitude, just as he is ordered to his connatural end by natural principles, not, however, without divine assistance. And such chief virtues are called “theological virtues.”<sup>13</sup>

These theological virtues thus serve as the principles for further virtues which correspond in due proportion to the supernatural end.<sup>14</sup> These further virtues are the infused moral virtues, and they realize the “vocation of the Christian believer to participate in the divine life.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the acquired virtues and the infused virtues are distinguished by both the principles from which they are derived

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*Disputatae de Virtutibus* are my own. I have, however, consulted the translation of Ralph McNerny in *Disputed Questions on Virtue* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> “Virtus igitur hominis ordinate ad bonum quod modificatur secundum regulam rationis humanae, potest ex actibus humanis causari.” ST I-II, q. 63, a. 2, c. (Leon. 6:409).

<sup>10</sup> See ST I-II, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 6:409).

<sup>11</sup> “Sic ergo patet quod virtutes in nobis sunt a natura secundum aptitudinem et inchoationem, non autem secundum perfectionem, praeter virtutes theologicas, quae sunt totaliter ab extrinseco.” ST I-II, q. 63, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:407).

<sup>12</sup> See ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:401).

<sup>13</sup> “Et quia huiusmodi beatitudo proportionem humanae naturae excedit, principia naturalia hominis, ex quibus procedit ad bene agendum secundum suam proportionem, non sufficiunt ad ordinandum hominem in beatitudinem praedictam. Unde oportet quod superaddantur homini divinitus aliqua principia, per quae ita ordinetur ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, sicut per principia naturalia ordinatur ad finem connaturalem, non tamen absque adiutorio divino. Et huiusmodi principia virtutes dicuntur theologicae.” Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See ST I-II, q. 63, a. 3, c. (Leon. 6:409).

<sup>15</sup> Cessario, 104.

and the end toward which they are oriented. Though both are directed toward human happiness, this happiness is presented by St. Thomas as a “twofold happiness,” an imperfect beatitude, which can be acquired by man through the right use of his natural powers, and a perfect beatitude, which is beyond the natural powers of man, and can only be attained through Divine assistance.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the infused virtues are of central importance to St. Thomas’s distinctive notion of virtue.<sup>17</sup>

*ii. Two Central Claims about the Distinction between Acquired and Infused Virtues*

The correct interpretation of how acquired and infused moral virtues exist in the human soul is debated by contemporary scholars, and is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>18</sup> Whether or not each moral virtue discussed by St. Thomas has an acquired and an infused form is also unclear, since he rarely states explicitly whether he is characterizing an infused or an acquired virtue. As Pinsent puts it, “although certain virtues, such as the theological virtues, clearly belong to the category of the infused virtues, those that have Aristotelian counterparts, such as ‘justice’ and ‘prudence,’ can seem more ambiguous at first.”<sup>19</sup> In the case of humility, Pinsent does not think that St. Thomas understands it as acquired, because “humility cannot be interpreted as proportionally equivalent to any virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.”<sup>20</sup> Keys, on the other hand, although she admits that humility is not listed in Aristotle’s account of virtue and that it is primarily

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<sup>16</sup> See ST I-II, q. 5, a. 5, c. (Leon. 6:42) and q. 62, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:401).

<sup>17</sup> See Andrew Pinsent, “Aquinas: Infused Virtues,” in *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2015), 141-53, where he presses the point that infused virtues are the only true or perfect virtues according to St. Thomas, and that they are essential for full human flourishing. He also questions those that ignore the differences in St. Thomas’s understanding of virtue from that of Aristotle given that he uses St. Augustine’s definition for virtue and that he offers an account of a new kind of virtue (theological virtues and infused) and also those who follow the neo-Thomistic notion of the “two-tiered” human good. His own suggestion is that St. Thomas’s notion of human perfection does not center on virtues of habituation, but rather on the fourfold structure of the infused virtues, gifts, beatitudes, and fruits.

<sup>18</sup> For a general overview of the “unification theory” which holds that the acquired virtues are “transformed” or “taken up” by the infused virtues and the “coexistence theory” which holds that the acquired virtues and infused virtues mutually coexist in the baptized see Angela McKay Knobel, “Two Theories of Christian Virtue,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010): 599-618.

<sup>19</sup> Pinsent, 144.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

a “religious virtue,” suggests that, since “Aquinas sees virtuous humility as supporting human community,” it also is a natural human excellence that is based on natural principles, and thus, an acquired virtue.<sup>21</sup> In order to argue my own position in this question, I will discuss two central claims about infused and acquired virtue that, according to Knobel, “any interpretation of Aquinas should take care to accommodate.”<sup>22</sup> I will describe these two claims here in order to apply them further on to make a case for the acquired virtue of humility in St. Thomas’s exposition, and to flesh out the distinctions between the acquired and the infused virtues of humility.

The first claim is that there is a “rule” or “standard” with which each kind of virtue brings man into accord. Knobel explains that St. Thomas holds that both acquired and infused virtues bring man into conformity with their respective “rules,” while vices turn him away from those same rules.<sup>23</sup> Knobel points out that the distinction between acquired and infused virtues arise by turning our attention to the two different “rules” to which a man may conform. The first rule is natural beatitude, “the good that corresponds to human nature,” and, to reach this good acquired virtues are sufficient.<sup>24</sup> The second is supernatural beatitude, which “exceeds the abilities of our human nature,” and thus requires infused capacities or virtues that bring man “into conformity with this higher standard.”<sup>25</sup> The natural active principles, which are “natural habitual knowledge of the first principles of thought and action” and a “natural desire for the good of reason itself,” provide the orientation of the acquired virtues, which perfect man’s activity toward his natural end.<sup>26</sup> St. Thomas insists, however, that these natural active principles are not capable of orienting

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<sup>21</sup> Keys, “Humility,” 219.

<sup>22</sup> Angela McKay Knobel, “Can Aquinas’s Infused and Acquired Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23 (2010): 382.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, see also DQVComm, a. 10 (2:733-38).

<sup>26</sup> Knobel, “Two Theories,” 612, see also DQVComm, a. 10 (2:733-38).

man to his supernatural beatitude.<sup>27</sup> Thus, there must be further principles that orient man to his supernatural end and are the source of virtuous activity ordered to that end. St. Thomas explains that these principles are the theological virtues, which orient man to his supernatural beatitude and by which the infused virtues perfect man's activity toward his supernatural end.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, "as man is ordered to the good of reason through his natural habitual knowledge of the first principles of thought and action, so man is ordered to supernatural beatitude by the theological virtues."<sup>29</sup> Thus, as discussed above, each kind of virtue is distinguished by its particular end: acquired virtue aims at a natural, albeit imperfect, human end, while infused virtue attains to the supernatural end.<sup>30</sup>

The second central claim of St. Thomas about the acquired and the infused virtues is that both produce actions that are "proportionate" to their respective ends. Acquired virtues *cannot* order man's activity to the good of supernatural beatitude because "they do not produce acts that are 'proportionate' to supernatural beatitude."<sup>31</sup> The infused virtues, then, "in conformity with the general orientation provided by the theological virtues," produce acts proportionate to the supernatural end.<sup>32</sup> The essential distinction between acts proportionate to the supernatural end of man and acts proportionate to the natural end of man has to do with the means attained by the acts of each kind of virtue; for example, St. Thomas argues that in regards to eating and drinking, the

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<sup>27</sup> See DQVComm a. 10 (2:733-38) and ST I-II, q. 63, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:410-11).

<sup>28</sup> Knobel, "Can Aquinas's," 384.

<sup>29</sup> Knobel, "Two Theories," 613, see also Sent., lib. III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 4, (3:1031), ed. M. F. Moos, O.P., (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1956).

<sup>30</sup> See Knobel, "Two Theories," 601-5 for a discussion of the way in which the "coexistence theory" argues that acquired virtues can be ordered by charity to the ultimate end of supernatural beatitude. However, even when this occurs, the acquired virtues "do not thereby lose their natural status . . . Charity simply adds a further motive to the existing acquired virtues" giving them a "new motor," namely supernatural beatitude, 602.

<sup>31</sup> Knobel, "Can Aquinas's," 384.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

man who is temperate according to the natural standard will eat and drink in view of the health of the body, while according to the divine standard, he may fast to bring his body into subjection.<sup>33</sup>

Any interpretation of St. Thomas's account that argues for both an acquired and an infused virtue of humility must satisfy these two central claims. An account of acquired humility must show that it is in conformity with the natural "rule" and thereby, ordered to a natural end of man, and that it produces acts proportionate to this end. On the other hand, an account of infused humility will show that it is in conformity with a supernatural "rule," and thus directed to the supernatural end of man, and that it produces acts that are also proportionate to that end.

## **2. The Case for an Acquired Virtue of Humility**

In this section, I discuss the possibility of an acquired virtue of humility in two parts. In Part i, I discuss why the case must be made for an acquired virtue of humility and not for the infused virtue. Next, since any acquired virtue must have a natural end, in Part ii, I argue that the acquired virtue of humility assists man to reach his natural end, which is a natural love of God, according to St. Thomas.

### *i. Why the Case Must Be Made*

As noted above, St. Thomas is usually not explicit about whether he is describing an acquired or an infused virtue. When he discusses humility, St. Thomas's account is just as inexplicit. However, using his central claims about distinguishing acquired and infused virtues, I will endeavor to show that both an acquired and an infused virtue of humility are possible according to St. Thomas's account of this virtue. He openly admits that humility is more an infused

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<sup>33</sup> See Knobel, "Can Aquinas's," 385 and ST I-II, q. 63, a. 4, c. (Leon. 6:410-11). See also Knobel, 385, where, citing Sent. lib. III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 4, ad. 2 (3:1031), she notes the differences between the acts of infused fortitude and the acts of acquired fortitude: "acts that are moderate by the standards of infused fortitude, such as dying for one's faith, would be excessive by the standard of acquired fortitude."

moral virtue than one acquired by human effort. Although “man reaches humility in two ways,” he does so “firstly and principally, by the gift of grace.”<sup>34</sup> Yet St. Thomas also indicates *another* way, albeit not as essential, that a man arrives at the virtue of humility by “human exertion.”<sup>35</sup> Although humility is principally infused, and thus, comes from and returns to charity, that is, friendship with God,<sup>36</sup> nevertheless, there remains a way in which humility can be cultivated.<sup>37</sup>

As I discussed in Chapter One, St. Thomas says that Aristotle does not address humility because it is not a “civic virtue.”<sup>38</sup> I further considered in Chapter Two how Aristotle’s reticence does not imply a rejection of humility as a virtue *in toto*.<sup>39</sup> I also noted that in considering humility as a potential part of temperance and moderation, St. Thomas is careful to align his account with his pagan predecessors when he “argues that humility *was* in fact included in various classical catalogues of ethical virtues,” including those of Cicero, Andronicus, and even Aristotle.<sup>40</sup> Apart from this scant evidence, I think much more can be said to clarify how St. Thomas considers humility to be not only infused, but also acquired, by stepping back to consider his larger understanding of the natural end of man. Given that infused humility is “first” and “principal,” I

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<sup>34</sup> “Homo ad humilitatem pervenit per duo. Primo quidem et principaliter, per gratiae donum . . . Aliud autem est humanum studium.” ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, ad. 2 (Leon 10:308).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> See ST II-II, q. 23, a. 1 (Leon. 8:162-63) and Keys, “Aquinas,” 56.

<sup>37</sup> I interpret this passage as an indication of the possibility of an acquired virtue of humility in St. Thomas’s account; however, it is not an explicit avowal that there is an acquired virtue of humility. Another possible interpretation of ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, ad. 2 is that the “human exertion” may refer to the necessary consent of man to God’s action in the soul, the opening of himself to God’s grace through the preparation of his soul for Him to act and cause further increase of the infused virtue in him. This does not mean that man “causes” the virtue to be formed, but rather that he offers himself to God, Who, having already “caused” the infused virtue at baptism, now further causes its increase without man’s assistance, but not without his preparation to dispose himself towards this increase. See DQVComm, a. 11, c. (2:739-40). Thus, according to this reading, St. Thomas is not describing how humility is an acquired virtue that is increased by repeated human acts in addition to an infused virtue, but rather how humility is an infused virtues that is further increased, not directly, but only “dispositively and meritoriously” by human exertion, in preparation for God’s action. See DQVComm, a. 11, ad. 14 (2:741).

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter One, Section 3, Part ii, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter Two, Section 2, Part iii, p. 54-57.

<sup>40</sup> Keys, “Aquinas,” 57. See Chapter One, Section 4, Part ii, p. 33-34.

will focus on showing that acquired humility is coherent with St. Thomas's understanding of virtue and man's natural end.

The first central claim made by St. Thomas about virtue, according to Knobel, is that it is ordered by a "rule." That humility can be directed toward the supernatural life of man is clear in St. Thomas's account. He says, "the reason why Christ chiefly commended humility to us was because, through it the impediment to man's salvation which consists in man's aiming at heavenly and spiritual things is greatly removed."<sup>41</sup> A further reason for its supernatural directedness might appear to be that the formal motive of humility is reverence for God. Nevertheless, Carlson points out that this does not mean that God Himself is the formal motive of humility: "The formal motive of humility, if one considers it carefully is not the divine authority itself, i.e., God as He is infinitely superior to His creatures, but rather the reverence which He inspires, the obligation which the soul feels to follow His guidance. Hence . . . neither [humility's] object nor its motive attains God Himself."<sup>42</sup> Thus, the formal motive is *reverence* for God, not God Himself.

Since humility is not directed absolutely to union with God Himself, as are the theological virtues, the possibility of humility directing man's actions to his natural end remains, so long as reverence for God is consistent with man's natural end. In order to show that there is an acquired virtue of humility, I will first argue that the natural end of man is a natural love of God, according to St. Thomas. Given that this is man's natural end, I will next propose that there arises a natural reverence for God in man, since he knows his own dependence on God for the very goodness of

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<sup>41</sup> "Ideo Christus praecipue humilitatem nobis commendavit, quia per hoc maxime removetur impedimentum humane salutis, quae consistit in hoc quod homo ad caelestia et spiritualia tendat, a quibus homo impeditur dum in terrenis magnificari studet." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad. 4 (Leon 10:301).

<sup>42</sup> Carlson, 364.

his existence. From this reverence, man is naturally inspired to concrete actions of subjection to God that cause the cultivation of acquired virtue of humility.

*ii. Man's Natural End*

St. Thomas characterizes “natural love” as an inclination (*inclinatio*) that is common to every nature though it exists differently in each according to the mode of that nature.<sup>43</sup> Further, St. Thomas says that “the will tends naturally to its last end” and that “the love of the good, which a man naturally wills as an end, is his natural love.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, this natural love is directed toward the good that is a natural end, in itself, for man. St. Thomas says that this “natural love is nothing other than that inclination which is implanted in nature by the Author of nature.”<sup>45</sup> Now St. Thomas shows that a man has a natural love of himself and other men, but, he also argues that man has a natural love for God above all things, including above himself.<sup>46</sup> In fact, all natures, whether intellectual natures, sensitive natures, or natures incapable of knowledge, have this inclination.<sup>47</sup> The reason is that all creatures, as a part to whole, tend naturally to the universal good, that is, God, since He is the whole that comprises each creature’s particular good.<sup>48</sup> Hence, all things, in their own way love God above themselves, since He is the “whole cause of and the existence and

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<sup>43</sup> See ST I, q. 60, a. 1, c. (Leon. 5:98). See also Sean B. Cunningham, “Aquinas on the Natural Inclination of Man to Offer Sacrifice to God,” *Proceedings of the ACPA* 86 (2013):185-200 for a discussion on the way in which *inclinatio naturalis*, as understood by St. Thomas, presupposes teleology and directedness to man’s natural end as a rational being and is not simply made up of irrational biological and psychological urges.

<sup>44</sup> “Unde voluntas naturaliter tendit in suum finem ultimum, omnis enim homo naturaliter vult beatitudinem. Et ex hac naturali voluntate causantur omnes aliae voluntates, cum quidquid homo vult, velit propter finem. Dilectio igitur boni quod homo naturaliter vult sicut finem, est dilectio naturalis.” ST I, q. 60, a. 2, c. (Leon. 5:100-1).

<sup>45</sup> “Amor naturalis nihil aliud sit quam inclinatio naturae indita ab auctore naturae.” *Ibid.*, q. 60, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 5:98).

<sup>46</sup> See *Ibid.*, q. 60, a. 3 (Leon. 5:102); a. 4 (Leon 5:103); a. 5 (Leon. 5:104).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 60, a. 1, c. (Leon. 5:98).

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, q. 60, a. 5 (Leon. 5:104-5); ST I-II, q. 109 a. 3, c. (Leon. 7:295). See also St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Summa Contra Gentiles* (=SCG), lib. III, cap. 16-8 of *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia*, Leonine ed. (Rome, 1926), (Leon. 14:38-43) where St. Thomas discusses how all things tend toward God as the universal good.

goodness” of all things.<sup>49</sup> This natural love of God, which surpasses even his natural love of himself, then, points to God as the natural end of man, but only inasmuch as He is the “cause” of all goodness or the universal good.

St. Thomas is clear that this natural love is by no means charity or any other virtue, but is rather far more basic.<sup>50</sup> The rectitude (*rectitudo*) of natural love is entirely different from that of charity, and natural love is perfected by charity. St. Thomas explains that “nature loves God above all things, accordingly as He is the beginning and end of natural good; charity, however, loves Him accordingly as he is the object of beatitude, and inasmuch as man has a certain spiritual fellowship with God.”<sup>51</sup> This natural love relates man to God only as dependent creature to his Cause and Source of his goodness, Who infinitely exceeds man in power. Without grace, however, man is not suited for the intimacy of friendship with God, which is charity.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, inasmuch as man naturally loves God as the cause of all goodness, He is, under this aspect of universal good, the natural end of man.

### **3. The Distinction between the Acquired and the Infused Virtues of Humility**

In this final section of this chapter, I argue for a distinction between the acquired virtue of humility and the infused virtue in St. Thomas’s account. I argue, in Part i, for a natural reverence for God that is the principle of the acquired virtue of humility. Part ii shows how each virtue of

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<sup>49</sup> “Sed in illis quorum unum est tota ratio existendi et bonitatis alii, magis diligitur naturaliter tale alterum quam ipsum; sicut dictum est quod unaquaeque pars diligit naturaliter totum plus quam se.” ST I, q. 60, a. 5, ad. 1 (Leon. 5:104).

<sup>50</sup> “Alia tamen est rectitudo naturalis dilectionis, et alia est rectitudo caritatis et virtutis, quia una rectitudo est perfectiva alterius.” Ibid., q. 60, a. 1, ad. 3 (Leon. 5:98).

<sup>51</sup> “Natura enim diligit Deum super omnia, prout est principium et finis naturalis boni: caritas autem secundum quod est obiectum beatitudinis, et secundum quod homo habet quandam societatem spiritualem cum Deo.” ST I-II, q. 109, a. 3, ad. 1 (Leon. 7:295).

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*, a. 3, c. (Leon. 7:295) where St. Thomas states that even to have natural love of God which refers all other loves to Him, man in his corrupt state, is in need of divine grace to heal his wounded nature lest it follow his private good according to its corruption.

humility proceeds by two different rules that guide the appetite, each of which is aimed toward a distinct end. The essential difference between the two rules comes from the difference in a man's relationship with God as he receives grace, growing in holiness and friendship with God. Finally, in Part iii, I will offer some passages that I interpret as descriptions of the distinct means according to which each of the two virtues of humility acts.

*i. The Reverence for God from which the Acquired Virtue and the Infused Virtue of Humility Grow*

Given that man by nature loves God insofar as He is the universal good and as his natural end, I will now argue that St. Thomas also thinks that there is a natural reverence for God that motivates man's humble activity toward this natural end. St. Thomas states that the principle (*principium*) and the root (*radix*) of the humility is "the reverence we bear towards God."<sup>53</sup> Humility's formal object (moderation of the appetite's desire for what is great) depends on this reverence for God, since this is the formal motive, namely, the cause of the virtue of humility.<sup>54</sup>

St. Thomas is explicit that reverence for God is ordered to man's supernatural end, and thus is a principle for the infused virtue of humility. He says that reverence for God belongs to the infused gift of fear given by the Holy Spirit.<sup>55</sup> A man who has this gift, seeks superiority only in God and as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and thus, it serves as the perfection of the infused virtue of humility.<sup>56</sup> The gifts are necessary, since, as Aumann explains, all infused virtues have human reason enlightened by faith as their motor cause while the gifts are promptings of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>53</sup> "Humilitas essentialiter in appetitu consistit, secundum quod aliquis refrenat impetum animi sui, ne inordinate tendat in magna: sed regulam habet in cognitione, ut scilicet aliquis non se existimet esse supra id quod est. Et utriusque principium et radix est reverentia quam quis habet ad Deum." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, c. (Leon. 10:307).

<sup>54</sup> "Humilitas causatur ex reverentia divina." Ibid., q. 161, a. 4, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:299); see also Chapter One, Section 1, Part ii, p. 13-16.

<sup>55</sup> See ST II-II, q. 19, a. 12, c. (Leon. 9:149-50) where St. Thomas explains that reverence and submission to God belong to filial fear as a divine gift.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.*, q. 19, a. 9, ad. 4. (Leon. 9:146). See also ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 10:298) where St. Thomas associates humility with the gift of fear, following St. Augustine.

toward actions completely beyond human reason even when enlightened by faith.<sup>57</sup> Because infused virtues are about the means to our supernatural end, man can only act from infused virtues imperfectly, since he can only know and love God imperfectly, “as through a glass darkly.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, in order to perform perfect actions directed to his supernatural end, he must be moved by another (*ab altero moveatur*), since the light of reason is not sufficient for him to act towards supernatural beatitude.<sup>59</sup> Aumann explains that:

[The infused virtues] remain constrained to a modality that is human so long as they remain under the rule and control of reason, even though enlightened by faith . . . Therefore, to be perfect, they must receive a divine mode that will adapt and accommodate them to this orientation to the supernatural end. Therefore, the gifts embrace all the matter of the infused virtues, both theological and moral.<sup>60</sup>

The gift of fear, then, perfects the infused virtue of humility insofar as it shares the same formal motive, which is reverence for God, that is, the awe of a child for his Father.<sup>61</sup>

Though reverence for God is clearly ordered to the supernatural end, whether reverence for God may also be ordered to man’s natural end of loving God as universal good must be established in order to show that an acquired virtue of humility is even possible. In his question on the virtue of religion, a virtue that shares with humility the formal motive of reverence for God, St. Thomas notes, “it is from a dictate of natural reason that man ought to do something through reverence for God.”<sup>62</sup> In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he is even more explicit about the principle from which this natural reverence arises:

Man feels himself obliged by natural instinct to pay reverence, in his own way, to God from Whom is the beginning of his being and all good. . . . Since God is not only the cause and beginning of our being, since our whole being is in His power, and since we owe

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<sup>57</sup> See Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology*, (Allen: Christian Classics, 1980), 92-93. See also See ST I-II, q. 68, a. 1, c. (Leon. 6:446-47).

<sup>58</sup> 1 Cor. 13:12.

<sup>59</sup> See ST I-II, q. 68, a. 2, c. (Leon. 6:449).

<sup>60</sup> Aumann, 94.

<sup>61</sup> See also Carlson, 399-408.

<sup>62</sup> “De dictamine rationis naturalis est quod homo aliqua faciat ad reverentiam divinam.” ST II-II, q. 81, a. 2, ad. 3 (Leon. 9:179).

everything that is in us to Him, consequently, He is truly our Lord, and what we show Him in homage is called service.<sup>63</sup>

Further in this passage, St. Thomas references the Greeks who called this service to God, *latría*.<sup>64</sup>

This reference suggests that even among pagan peoples, reverence, which gives rise to acts of service to God, is a reality. While the virtue of religion acts, because of this natural dictate of reverence, by rendering to God the worship due Him insofar as He is the first principle of all things and exceedingly excellent, “humility, in bending us down to earth, has made recognition of our littleness, of our poverty, and thus in its own manner glorifies the grandeur of God.”<sup>65,66</sup>

In this passage, as in St. Thomas’s discussion of man’s natural love of God, the reverence of God is linked with knowledge of God as the “beginning of his being and all good,” that is, as his Cause, the One to whom man owes his very good existence and everything good that is in him. While this reverence for God is radically different from the reverence for God inspiring the infused virtue of humility, nevertheless, St. Thomas argues, there is a natural reverence for God, insofar as He is cause of our being. This natural reverence for God is the principle of the acquired virtue of humility, which perfects man’s activity toward his natural end of loving God as universal good.

#### *ii. The Rule Guiding the Acts of the Acquired Virtue and the Acts of the Infused Virtue of Humility*

Besides this distinction between the motives from which each virtue springs, acquired and infused humility each employ a particular “rule guiding the appetite.”<sup>67</sup> Man’s natural knowledge

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<sup>63</sup> “Et quia etiam quodam naturali instinctu se *obligatum* sentit ut Deo suo modo reverentiam impendat, a quo est sui esse et omnis boni principium . . . Quia vero Deus non solum est nostri esse causa et principium, sed totum nostrum esse in potestate ipsius est; et totum quod in nobis est, ipsi debemus; ac per hoc vere dominus noster est: id quod in honorem Dei exhibemus, *servitium* dicitur.” SCG, lib. III, cap. 119, n. 7, 9 (Leon. 14:371). All translations of *Summa Contra Gentiles* are my own. I have, however, consulted the translation of Vernon J. Bourke in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, ed. Joseph Kenny, O. P. (New York: Hanover House, 1955-57).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. 119, n. 10 (Leon. 14:370).

<sup>65</sup> See ST II-II, q. 81, a. 3, c. (Leon. 9:180) and a. 4, c. (Leon. 9:180-81).

<sup>66</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 4. See also Carlson, 386-90, for a discussion of the distinction between the virtues of humility and religion according to St. Thomas.

<sup>67</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, c. (Leon. 10:295).

of his relation to God as a dependent creature in relation to his Cause is limited. Man's supernatural knowledge of his relation to God is enlightened by grace: "the natural light of the intellect is strengthened by the infusion of gratuitous light."<sup>68</sup> In both types of knowledge, man realizes his own deficiency. On the other hand, man's understanding of his own deficiency is distinct due to the essentially different character of man's relationship to God in the state of grace and that of his relationship to God outside of grace.

There are two basic rules, one for the acquired virtue of humility and one for the infused virtue. The first is available to natural reason: that God is the cause of our existence and distinct from us by His grandeur and ultimate goodness. St. Thomas argues that there are three things man can know about God by his natural reason: first, that He is in relationship with His creatures insofar as He is the Cause of them; second, that His creatures are distinct from Him; and finally, that He is distinct from His creatures not by defect, but because of His excellence, insofar as He super exceeds (*superexcedit*) them all.<sup>69</sup> It is from these truths that acquired humility proceeds.

The second rule, as Garrigou-Lagrange explains, is available only to faith: "Humility is also based on the *mystery of grace* and on the necessity of *actual grace* for placing the least salutary act. This mystery surpasses the natural forces of reason; it is known by faith and finds explicit expression in the words of the Savior: 'Without me you can do nothing "in the order of salvation."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "lumen naturale intellectus confortatur per infusionem luminis gratuiti" ST I, q. 12, a. 13, c. (Leon. 4:137).

<sup>69</sup> St. Thomas says that to know God in His essence is beyond the capacity of man since knowledge is in the knower, according to the mode of the knower, that is, according to his nature (ST I, q. 12, a. 4, c. (Leon. 4:120-1)). "Now our soul, as long as we live in this life, has its being in corporeal matter, therefore, naturally it does not know things unless they have their form in matter, or that which can be known by such a form" (Ibid., q. 12, a. 11, c. (Leon. 4:135)). Since God's essence is not in matter, His essence is thus unavailable to the senses, so that man cannot naturally know God's essence, for the essence of God cannot be seen in any created similitude (Ibid., q. 12, a. 2, c. (Leon. 4:116-7)). Nevertheless, there is a lesser natural knowledge of God available to man attained through his knowledge of God's creatures which are caused by Him. Even though the whole power of God cannot be known, "because the sensible creatures that are the effects of God are not equal to His power as their cause," yet, "since they are His effects and dependent on Him as cause, from them we can be led to know of God whether He exists; and to know of Him what necessarily belongs to Him, as He is the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him" (Ibid., q. 12, a. 12, c. (Leon. 4:136)).

<sup>70</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, 5.

Infused humility proceeds from an understanding of this truth as well as from an understanding of the truth that God is first Cause. His understanding of God as first Cause, however, is enlightened by faith, and thus is more profound than the understanding of this truth based on natural reason alone. As I will explain further on, the man with infused humility knows God, not simply as a first Cause, but as his personal Creator, and thus, he knows himself as particularly chosen to be by, and to be in relation with, that Creator.

The main distinction between the two rules is, not only the extent of man's knowledge of his deficiency in comparison with God, but, more importantly, the degree of the intimacy that characterizes his relationship with God. By the acquired virtue of humility, a man sees and acknowledges that his whole being comes from God, that he began to exist through Him, and that, in comparison with His greatness and goodness, his own goodness is nothing. His relationship with God, moreover, consists in a reverence characterized by obeisance and showing tributary honor to the One Who is the Source of man's goodness. He is conscious of the contingency of his very being insofar as he recognizes that He would not have existed without God as his Cause. He is able, in this regard, to banish pride insofar as he recognizes that the source of his goodness and his talents is not himself, but rather, his Cause, Who placed them within his being from his beginning. His actions and carriage reflect his own evidencing of this truth within the human community to which he belongs.

For example, consider a concert pianist who also is a man who possesses the acquired virtue of humility. He bears his talent as a natural gift he had received from God, by acknowledging Him with honor. He curbs pride by recognizing that he relies perpetually on God for the sustenance, health, and strength of his being that allow him to continue to practice and cultivate his natural gift. He appreciates his talent as a goodness that is relatively small in

comparison with the superabundant goodness of God, and thus carries himself humbly in his external words, expressions, and demeanor amongst his neighbors. Overall, his relationship with God is marked by respect, admiration, and reverential awe. According to his own acknowledged deficiency, he maintains the appropriate distance from One so infinitely great, and approaches only that which is strictly proportionate to his natural gifts.

The acquired virtue of humility also shapes how he relates to other creatures. He is disposed to subject himself to his neighbor according to truths that he sees clearly, and, according to which, he shapes his life. Though he is a wonderful piano player, let us imagine that he is a horrific cook. This fact he easily accepts, since he sees himself as distinct and inferior to God, Who is supremely excellent, while he is aware of his own defects. In other words, he is not surprised or distressed by his own deficiency, but accepts his weaknesses as natural necessities, those things that simply are and have to be according to his given nature.<sup>71</sup> Further, he also effortlessly recognizes the goodness of others as caused by the ultimate goodness of God, and thereby subjects his own deficiencies to them. While he is a dreadful cook, his wife is not, and he, from his acquired virtue of humility, readily recognizes, enjoys, and praises this goodness in her that manifests itself to him at dinner time. Further, he is conscious of the contingency of all things, insofar as, like his own being, the being of wonderful particular creatures that he enjoys also depend on God as their cause. Thus, he walks the earth as steward insofar as he understands himself to be one creature among many, not the primary cause of the others. He assumes, then, a disposition of respect and reverence for the particular goodnesses in all creatures that are manifest to him, while acknowledging that they are manifestations of the ultimate goodness of God.

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<sup>71</sup> See Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 14-19 on the natural necessities which are known by human reason and by which things act according as they are born to be.

With the advent of Christian revelation, however, and the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul of the baptized, the full brilliance of the virtue of humility is displayed. The extent to which infused humility requires the recognition of the truth of man's dependence and the profoundly intimate relationship, into which he is invited, goes utterly beyond the feeble sight of reason's natural light that guides acquired humility. While the naturally humble man experiences that he is dependent contingently upon God, the supernaturally humble man experiences that his existence is wholly *gratuitous*, that is, *freely chosen* by God Who is his personal Creator. The man with the infused virtue of humility recognizes, not only that his being is dependent upon God, but also that he *did not have to be at all* and that his particular goodness adds nothing to the universal goodness of God.<sup>72</sup> This is not evident to natural reason that sees only that God is his Cause, not that God did not *need* to cause him. Thus, the relationship of supernaturally humble man to God would involve not only the honor of natural reverence, but also gratitude and love of this Creator Who has desired him, personally, to be for his own sake.

In addition, while the acquired virtue of humility recognizes God as the *beginning* of his being and his natural gifts as well as Source of his existence, he would not ascribe the cultivation of his gifts to God's agency. That God not only sustains, but also provides *actual grace* even for man's growth is not naturally evident. As a result, the naturally humble man may consider himself the primary cause of his own cultivation in virtue and in his other natural gifts. By infused humility, however, man knows that he is utterly dependent upon God for even the smallest and

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<sup>72</sup> See Sokolowski, *The God*, 21-40, and also Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 110-17. Sokolowski explains how the revealed Christian understanding of God as Creator (not simply as cause) brings to light the gratuitousness of creation which adds nothing to God's own goodness and greatness and is in no way needed by Him. See also ST I, q. 19, a. 3, c. (Leon. 4:235), where St. Thomas writes that "Since the goodness of God is perfect, and can exist without other things since no perfection can accrue to him from other things, it follows that His willing things apart from himself is not absolutely necessary." Hence, since all things do not necessarily proceed from God, they are gratuitously *willed* into existence by Him.

slightest growth, and that he relates to God as a child utterly dependent on his Father for all his needs.

Moreover, as revealed in faith, man is chosen as an adopted son of God, through the superabundant grace won for him by Christ's redemption, and received in the sacrament of Baptism; he has put on Christ, and is a beloved child of the Father. In other words, the infinitely good God, Who has chosen each man to be, has further chosen him to enter into relationship with Him as His own child. Beyond any stretch of reason's most extravagant hopes, God has called man to become a partaker of the His own divine nature and to the intimacy of friendship with God to be lived in eternal union with Him forever in heaven. While it is true that these revelations of his divine sonship and his destined union with God show the heights to which man is called, these gifts, *precisely because they are completely gratuitous*, ultimately reveal the perfect goodness and generosity of God, Who gives Himself freely to lowly and finite men, who have not merited this magnificent and condescending love.

By the manifestation of these revealed truths of the Faith to man's intellect, and by the enkindling of his supernatural desire for union with God in his heart, the infinity of the yawning gap between himself as weak, broken, and utterly dependent creature and God as Creator, Redeemer, Father, and Beloved is powerfully evidenced, evoking self-abasement that is of a wholly different kind than that evinced by the naturally humble man. At any glimmer of God's goodness, the man with a deep infused humility casts himself down to the earth as one who knows himself to be entirely unworthy of any good. Yet, by this same revelation and profound friendship with God, he paradoxically knows himself to be called to a profoundly intimate and eternal relationship with this same magnificent God, even to participate in His very nature. That is, he knows himself to be chosen, wanted, and desired by God Himself, a magnificent reversal of all his

natural expectations. Thus, the mean in an act of the infused virtue of humility disappears. There is, theoretically, *no limit* to the self-abasement of the supernaturally humble man before God Himself except insofar as man is practically limited by his own finite being. Further, charity orients the infused virtue of humility, thereby opening man's soul to the reception of God's love. Thus, his moderation of the passion of hope is measured by a wholly different rule, one that is beyond natural reason's vision alone, but is illumined by faith and directed by charity toward union with God.

While the mysterious nature of God's grace renders a full account of the infused virtue of humility impossible, I would like to outline some of its possible aspects. Consider our concert pianist, but this time, disposed to act according to the infused virtue of humility. He regards his talent with awe and as a gift that he has received totally and gratuitously from God at his beginning, and for which he is utterly dependent upon Him for both its maintenance and cultivation. Further, he carefully discerns, by paying attention to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, how to best use this gift according to God's plan. He strives to fulfill this plan at every moment as one unworthy, but in love with the God Who has chosen him. Ultimately, he offers his talents back to Him, knowing his weakness and incapacity for using them to do good, but trusting in God to make of him an instrument, in whom God Himself will work for the good. He banishes all pride by ceaseless awareness of his own nothingness without God Who has created him, sustains him, and perfects him by His power, and yet approaches his own good because God beckons him to it as his own Father. He understands that his deficiencies from sin are wholly his. He knows that such sins are the only thing he is capable of if he abandons or removes himself from God's grace, yet he looks confidently to God as Friend and Beloved, Who readily forgives and longs to be with him. Further, he not only recognizes the goodness of others as reflections of the ultimate goodness of God, and

thereby subordinates his own deficiencies to them, but he is readily willing to believe that there may be a trove of hidden goodness even in those who appear more imperfect than himself, that he might thereby subject himself to *all* of his neighbors. The light of faith also aids his subjection to his neighbors, since he recognizes their creation in God's image, their own supernatural destiny by His Redemption, and the indwelling of the Trinity that may be in them by their Baptism and perseverance in God's grace.

*iii. The Mean of the Acquired and of the Infused Virtues of Humility*

As I have tried to show, the acts of a man that proceed from the infused virtue of humility and those which proceed from the acquired virtue of humility are measured by completely different means, as they are guided by two distinct "rules." The acquired virtue moderates according to natural reason alone, while the infused virtue moderates according to reason enlightened by faith and strengthened by grace. Recall that St. Thomas is never explicit about whether he is discussing the acts of the acquired or of the infused virtue of humility; however, in three texts, he discusses what *suffices* to have the virtue of humility, and what *goes above and beyond* in the perfection of this virtue. Let me be clear that it is not evident whether or not St. Thomas had the distinction between acquired and infused humility in mind in the following passages; nevertheless, I will suggest that each virtue might be extracted from them.

The first text is found in the corpus of *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 161, a. 3, which I discussed in Chapter One.<sup>73</sup> Here he says man *ought* to subject his own deficiencies to what is God's in his fellow man. As I have suggested above, the man possessing acquired humility easily recognizes and submits himself to the goodness in others that surpasses his own deficiency. However, the further acts that the humble man may do include subjecting his own gifts from God

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<sup>73</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 3, c. (Leon. 10:298) and also, Chapter One, Section 3, Part i, p. 22-24.

to those of others and considering himself the worst of all sinners. That man *may* do these acts suggests that perhaps they are not necessarily commanded by natural reason alone nor compatible with man's purely natural initiative, but must be inspired by the divine light of faith and supported by grace.

A further text is found in article six where the fourth objector explains three degrees of humility, the first of which is to subject oneself to others who are superior and not to set oneself above one's equals; the second is to submit to equals and to consider oneself equal to inferiors; and the third is to submit to all, even inferiors.<sup>74</sup> St. Thomas affirms in his reply that these are degrees of humility among men.<sup>75</sup> Again, the acquired virtue of humility proceeds by a natural knowledge of God as Cause of all goodness in creatures, which is evident to human reason. Further, the naturally humble man subordinates himself to goodness in others insofar as it comes from God. Therefore, the man who acts according to right reason, first, sees the goodness in others that has been caused by God, and, second, readily submits himself to their goodness. Those whom he sees are equal in goodness, he would rightly regard as equal; those whom he sees are deficient in goodness, he would rightly, by natural reason, set himself above them. This is not true for the

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<sup>74</sup> Article six discusses the St. Benedict's degrees of humility as valid expressions of this virtue. Although I do not have space here to discuss this article at length, it is controversial in its portrayal of humility. Without developing an argument fully here, I think that many times this article is read out of context and without careful attention to the precise characterization which St. Thomas gives humility in the preceding five articles. I also think that this study of humility as an acquired and as an infused virtue may clarify confusion about St. Thomas's affirmation of St. Benedict's degrees as a legitimate expressions of humility. For example, Jay Newman in "Humility and Self-Realization," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 16 (1982): 275-85 suggests that in St. Thomas's treatment of humility as a virtue looks more like a vice since, "Christian humility can look as much like an extreme as a like a mean, especially if one takes seriously something like St. Benedict's list of degrees, with its references to 'acknowledging oneself useless'" (279). Thus, as Newman understands him, "St. Thomas cannot seem to bridge the gap between St. Benedict's Rule and Book IV of Aristotle's Ethics" (280). In considering St. Thomas's treatment of humility, it seems that Newman failed to recall St. Thomas's essential distinction between acquired virtues and infused virtues, which, I argue in this chapter, informs his multifaceted characterizations of humility, particularly in actions that seem beyond human reason. This is precisely because they *are* beyond natural reason alone, but remain within the expanded bounds of reason enlightened by faith. Thus, by his characterization of two kinds of virtue, St. Thomas makes a place for what is apparent to natural reason as unreasonable self-effacement to become both reasonable and praiseworthy in the light of faith.

<sup>75</sup> See ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, arg. 4 and ad. 4 (Leon. 10:307-8).

man with infused humility who, enlightened by faith, subjects himself rightly, not only to his equals, but also to his inferiors.

Finally, beyond all that natural reason can ascertain, St. Thomas affirms that:

It is possible, *without falsehood*, to believe and pronounce oneself the most despicable of all men according to the hidden defects which we see in ourselves and the gifts of God which are hidden in others . . . Similarly, one may, *without falsehood*, confess and believe oneself in all things useless and unworthy according to one's own capability, so as to refer all one's sufficiency to God.<sup>76</sup>

What is impossible by the "rule" of reason which guides the acquired virtue of humility, is emphasized as not only possible, but *according to the truth*, that is, "without falsehood," when reason is illumined by faith.

Thus described, the mysteriously supernatural mean for the infused virtue of humility causes most of us to stand in awe and wonder, at a loss to explain, by any stretch and strain of our natural reason, the curious actions of such a humble man. He shows us, however, far more clearly, who man is and Who God is than any naturally humble man. This is not to say that the man who acts from the acquired virtue of humility does not also evidence truth about himself and God; he certainly does. However, as I have tried to show, the fullness and richness of the truth, which is evidenced by the humble soul, enlightened by faith and strengthened by, grace, is radically more brilliant than the truth that is evidenced by human effort aided by natural reason alone.

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<sup>76</sup> "Aliquis absque falsitate potest se credere et pronuntiare omnibus viliorem, secundum defectus occultos quos in se recognoscit, et dona Dei quae in aliis latent . . . Similiter etiam absque falsitate potest aliquis confiteri et credere ad omnia se inutilem et indignum, secundum proprias vires, ut sufficientiam suam totam in Deum referat." ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, ad. 1 (Leon 10:308).

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## *CONCLUSION*

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Though I am unable to fully explore the contemporary relevance of St. Thomas's account of humility here, I would like to offer a few concluding thoughts on this virtue's particular importance in our modern cultural and philosophical milieu. I will characterize in broad strokes a particular trend of modern philosophy, which I admit deserves a much more thorough treatment than I can give. I do not mean to suggest there is nothing that the modern philosophers add to the scholastic account of humility presented by St. Thomas. Rather, I want only to suggest that the humble man, which St. Thomas describes, is more capable of evidencing reality than is the modern man, who is the "subject of projects," according to a recent article by Mark Shiffman. His article points out that modern man fails to see clearly Who God is, and thus, the One to Whom he is related most importantly.<sup>1</sup>

In his article, entitled "Humanity 4.5," Shiffman exposes the "idolatry of progress" in which man's economic, political, and scientific mastery is hailed as the ultimate truth about reality and "the only sin is the refusal of optimism."<sup>2</sup> Shiffman's account begins with Duns Scotus's argument that human affirmations about God are univocal, thus, reducing the distinction between man and God to a distinction merely of degree between a finite being and an infinite being. Steve Fuller, a leading advocate of transhumanism, modernity's most novel manifestation of its revolution in metaphysics, concludes from Duns Scotus "Divine attributes differ from human ones only by degree not kind. . . . This in turn allowed for direct comparisons between

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<sup>1</sup> Shiffman, "Humanity 4.5," *First Things* (2015): 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

human and divine conditions of being, and hence a trajectory of progress.”<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, on the other hand, insists that comparisons between God and man are analogical, since God’s “goodness,” for example, is different in *kind* from man’s “goodness,” although there is a relative likeness between them such that both are rightly called “goodness.” Fuller’s “direct comparisons” between God and man, however, are inappropriate, since they reduce the difference between God’s excellences and man’s excellences to a matter of *degree*. Because of this mistaken reduction of the essential difference between man and God to only an accidental difference of degree, modern man began to fantasize that it was possible to actually overcome the difference in degree between his being and that of God, and to really make himself divine.

With this univocal predication, the “trajectory of progress” was begun, streaming through Bacon, who endeavors “to endow the human family through our hands with new mercies,” and through Descartes who seeks “to render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature,” thus advancing belief in man’s ability to provide, by himself, for his own comfort, as well as subject all of nature to himself through scientific endeavor.<sup>4,5</sup> Locke and Marx expand upon this current of thought, claiming that the natural world has no intrinsic value except insofar as it is the raw material for human ingenuity and enterprise. This trajectory continues through Feuerbach, who claims that God is a projection of our own human perfection, and Nietzsche, who asserts that, “because the ‘transcendent,’ the ‘beyond,’ and ‘heaven’ have been abolished, only the ‘earth’ remains” and thus a new order of “absolute dominance of pure power over the earth through

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<sup>3</sup> Fuller and Veronika Lipińska, *The Proactionary Imperative: A Foundation for Transhumanism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 17, quoted in Mark Shiffman, “Humanity 4.5,” *First Things* (2015): 25.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>5</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2003), 41.

man” must be established.<sup>6</sup> Finally, transhumanism, the current form of this dizzying trajectory, “mounts a rebellion against the natural constraints of the organic human body, harnessing the power of technological innovations to render it the instrument of our arbitrary will.”<sup>7</sup> At each step, the greatness of God recedes from modern man’s recognition, and the imaginary grandeur of his own power increases. Of course, the conclusion is that God disappears entirely and man’s will alone remain at the pinnacle of all that is.

The metaphysical implications of these modern notions run radically counter, not only to St. Thomas’s own understanding of man as a subject who is characterized by “an ecstatic existence in God,” but also to many prominent past thinkers including pre-philosophic pagans, ancient philosophers in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition, and other theologians and philosophers following in the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>8</sup> According to Shiffman, as modernity either rejects God or renders Him a

<u>seful projection of human possibilities . . . the human is no longer an ecstatic subject who receives the gift of being and the grace that fructifies our nature, but is himself the primary source of transcendence. Since this transcendence no longer grounds itself ecstatically in the Creator of the world, it has to be attained by *negation* of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the world no longer appears as inherently good; in fact, it remains for modern man to make of this world a better world in the future and, presumably, the best world in some further distant future. As a result, through a terrible contortion of the divine image within man, transhumanism “imagines itself as a redemptive project of liberation for all humanity.”<sup>10</sup> Given this broad characterization of modernity’s “trajectory of progress,” it is no wonder that modern

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nihilism*, vol. 4 of *Nietzsche*, ed. David Farrell Krell, tr. Frank A Capuzzi (New York: Harper Collins, 1982), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Shiffman, 29.

<sup>8</sup> See Shiffman, 27-29 for his portrait of the changes in man’s understanding of himself as subject.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

philosophers must either radically re-interpret humility or completely reject it as viciously contrary to Man, the Supreme Master of all that there is.<sup>11</sup>

In St. Thomas's exposition on the vice of pride, a similar contempt of God as the One Who is wholly Other and about Whom our affirmations have merely analogous meaning looms large alongside a related rejection of man's metaphysical status as a created, finite being.<sup>12</sup> By "overpassing the rule of reason" (*supergreditur regulam rationis*) which guides humility, "pride imitates God inordinately. For it has equality of fellowship under Him, and wishes to usurp His dominion over our fellow creatures."<sup>13</sup> This inordinate imitation of God is precisely the position of the modern man who has rejected the limitations of his own finitude and, over and above the truth attained by the rule of reason which humility acknowledges and joyfully adheres to, has mistakenly exalted himself in his own cognition to the heights of divinity in his feverish pursuit of his own "projects."

Further, the projects of the proud man, since they are utterly delusional and completely abstracted from reality, are, St. Thomas says, bound to fail: "when a man attributes to himself a greater good than he has, it follows that his appetite tends to his own superiority *in a measure exceeding his competency*."<sup>14</sup> Here we come to the urgency of applying St. Thomas's exposition of humility as a remedy for modern man. Since his projects are based on delusion, they inherently "exceed his competency;" that is, modern man is doomed to failure and, in the

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<sup>11</sup> See Joseph Lawrence Tadie, "Between Humilities: A Retrieval of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Virtue of Humility," (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 2006), 177-215 for an interesting discussion of the similarities and differences between the interpretations of humility by Bacon, Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, and Nietzsche. According to Tadie, Bacon and Hobbes re-interpret humility, Spinoza rejects it, Hume views it as a vice, and Nietzsche renders it a malicious ploy of the weak to restrict the natural, healthy, external realization of the will to power of the strong.

<sup>12</sup> See especially ST II-II, q. 162, a. 6. (Leon. 10:323-24).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., q. 162, a. 1, c. (Leon. 10:310); "Superbia perverse imitator Deum. Odit namque cum sociis aequalitatem sub illo, sed imponere vult sociis dominationem suam pro illo." Ibid., a. 1, ad. 1 (Leon. 10:310).

<sup>14</sup> "Et ideo cum aliquis attribuit sibi maius bonum quam habeat, consequens est quod eius appetitus tendit in excellentiam *propriam ultra modum sibi convenientem*." Ibid., q. 162, a. 4, c. (Leon. 10:317-18), emphasis mine.

extreme manifestations of his rebellion against the truth, to utter destruction of himself. Even the modern movement senses this approaching doom, according to Shiffman, as “the more the empire of economic, political, and scientific mastery shows signs of immanent collapse (at least in the West), the more the anxiety of control increases, generating an increasingly desperate need to convince ourselves that progress is still the ultimate truth about reality.”<sup>15</sup> Shiffman calls this “sense of urgency” the “most ludicrous aspect of the transhumanist faith’s mythmaking” for it indicates a most perplexing incoherency:<sup>16</sup>

If progress is inevitable, if we continue to make discoveries that deliver enhancement and contribute to our self-overcoming, why do transhumanists feel an almost desperate need to speed the pace of discovery? . . . The insistence on faster solutions to human limitations seems a lot like an inability to come to a mature reckoning with finitude and death.<sup>17</sup>

The proud, modern man doggedly and desperately pursues his self-projected illusion of transcendence that will haunt, hound, and eventually destroy him.

What St. Thomas offers is an alternative way of living, one grounded in the truths of who man is and Who God is, and the relation between them. As St. Thomas describes him, the humble man appears as an embodied response to this confused metaphysical conflation of the divine and the human, the very two terms that the humble man evidences by his virtue. He sees clearly the utter nothingness that he is on his own in comparison to the sheer majesty of God, which he sees insofar as he is able, according to his human intellect and the gift of grace. From this rule of reason, he responds by both interior and exterior acts of humility, which proceed from man’s recognition of the greatness of God in Himself and in the gifts of his neighbor. All these actions he does out of reverence for God and in subjection to Him. Thus, his whole being

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<sup>15</sup> Shiffman, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 30.

is a beacon, evidencing the most fundamental truths about man's authentic pursuit of human excellence and even transcendence: the truth of who he is, the truth of Who God is, and the truth of the infinite distance between. The paradox is, of course, that the distorted "transcendence" for which the modern man thirsts is a pitiful imitation of the high perfection to which the humble man opens himself by his reverence for God. In light of Christian revelation, all men are called by God to indeed transcend the world by participation in the divine life; however, this will only be through our relation of "ecstatic communion with the person of God" and not by any amount of human willing and straining.<sup>18</sup> No imaginary transhumanism comes close to the pinnacle for which God has destined man, which is only available to the lowly ones who approach as those unworthy, relying on the grace of God alone to raise them up.

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<sup>18</sup> Shiffman, 28.

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**APPENDIX**

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**Humility and Magnanimity Compared:**

	<b>Humility</b>	<b>Magnanimity</b>
<b>Matter <i>in qua</i></b>	Irascible Appetite	Irascible Appetite
<b>Immediate Matter <i>circa quam</i></b>	Passion of Hope	Passion of Hope
<b>Mediate Matter <i>circa quam</i></b>	Arduous Good (all good things; what is great ( <i>magna</i> ))	Arduous Good (what is most superior of what is great ( <i>magna</i> ), namely, honor)
<b>Formal Object</b>	Moderation of the passion of hope	Moderation of the passion of hope
<b>Formal Motive</b>	Subjection to God out of reverence for Him	Using one's gifts from God to strive for one's own good
<b>Kind of Virtue</b>	Potential part of temperance	Potential part of fortitude and Quasi-integral part of fortitude
<b>Mode (Modus)</b>	Restraining passion of hope	Confirming passion of hope

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