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Thomas Aquinas and social virtues of piety and respect: an outlook of the history of education

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ABSTRACT. This study will analyze the relationship between education and politics at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. The source for this study is based on two questions of the *Summa Theologiae* (II - II), written by Thomas Aquinas. They relate to the Question 101 on the Mercy, and Question 102, on Respect. When dealing with piety and respect, Master Thomas teaches his students the importance of tolerance and respect among men, so that life could elapse in the collective space. Given this urban environment, Thomas showed that the life in the city and in the university became complex, requiring people to have new concepts about social interaction, especially in relation to the ruler. Men, therefore, needed to learn the art of living together and the art of politics to meet new social laws. Reflecting on the writings of Master Thomas, we learn, through historical memory, how the theorists of earlier times were able to combine, in their writings and teachings, the knowledge to be taught as well as the guiding principles of politics as important for social relationship, regardless of historical time.

Keywords: history of medieval education, Thomas Aquinas, politics.

Thomas de Aquino e as virtudes sociais da piedade e do respeito: um olhar da História da Educação

RESUMO. Analisaremos, nesse artigo, a relação entre o ensino e a política na Universidade de Paris, no século XIII. As fontes para este estudo são duas questões da *Summa Theologiae* (II - II), de Tomás de Aquino. São as Questões 101, sobre a Piedade, e 102, sobre o Respeito. Ao tratar da piedade e do respeito, Mestre Tomás destaca aos seus alunos a importância da tolerância e do respeito entre os homens, de modo que esses pudessem viver em um espaço coletivo. O Aquinate mostrou aos homens que a vida na cidade e na universidade tornara-se complexa, exigindo que as pessoas tivessem novos conceitos sobre a interação social, especialmente em relação ao governante. Os homens, por isso, precisavam aprender a arte de viver juntos e a arte da política de cumprir as novas leis sociais. Refletindo sobre os escritos do mestre Tomas, aprendemos, por meio da memória histórica, como os teóricos de outros tempos foram capazes de combinar em seus escritos e ensinamentos o conhecimento a ser ensinado com os princípios orientadores da política, aspecto importante para o relacionamento social, independentemente do tempo histórico.

Palavras-chave: história da educação medieval, Tomás de Aquino, política.

Introduction

This text aims to discuss the educational aspects contained in writings of Thomas Aquinas, professor at the University of Paris in the second half of the thirteenth century. The medieval writings, in general, and especially this master's, had as central features the aim of directing teaching and theoretical debates to men's practical and real world. It is quite relevant for us education historians to highlight this point, since historiography, when resuming this historical time, remains generally attached to the lenses of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, particularly regarding issues that involve education. Modern theorists needed, historically, to refute the medieval authors and everything that they investigated, since

this conflict involved the construction of the society of which they were contemporary and whose first goal was to destroy the forces and institutions of the Old Regime. Hence, they needed to bury the theories that legitimized them, especially the scholastic model of education and knowledge.

The critique of Renaissance and Enlightenment to scholasticism is therefore legitimate, because it is historical, and it expressed the struggle among the new theories that emerged due to social transformations, which made men the epicenter of everything and moved God to a secondary role¹. In this scenario, it is

¹On the role of historical and political critique from the Renaissance and Enlightenment to the Middle Ages, we suggest the article from Oliveira (1999),

understandable and justifiable that all the writings that addressed God as the driving force of all things were refuted, since they were not considered as based upon valid theories. The historic atmosphere, the eminent split between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, led the eyes of the modern theorists to medieval writings. Yet, the closeness between these two formulations is undeniable:

[...] 'well, the action characteristic of man as man is thinking, because this is what differ them from animals' [...]. The principle by which we think is the intellect, as Aristotle says (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 1999, p. 119, our underline).

And

[...] noting that this truth: 'I think therefore I am', was so firm and so right that all the most extravagant skeptics' assumptions would not be able to affect it, I thought I could accept it, without scruple, as the first principle of philosophy [...] (DESCARTES, 1987, p. 46. author's underline).

The former is from the theologian / philosopher Thomas Aquinas in the work *The agent Intellect...*, the latter is from the founder of the rationalism, Rene Descartes. If we read these two ideas as principles of abstract knowledge, regardless of who made them and the time in history in which they came to light, we find that both reflect the notion that man is man because he thinks and thinking is what makes him different from other animals. Thus, both Aquinas and Descartes see men in the same way: as reflective beings. We are certainly not saying that these two intellectuals used to think the same way. It would not be possible to say that by the time which distinguishes them and by the opposite conceptions they had regarding social relations and the world, in general. The Dominican explains men by means of divine creation and the rationalist by means of materiality, but both define men by the same principle: for thinking.

The question posed to us, historians and education historians, concerns the fact that even having lasted almost three centuries between the revolution that swept the major institutions of the old regime from history and eight centuries of the apex of the scholastic knowledge and teaching, within the theory, we maintain the same look the Enlightenment men had towards medieval knowledge. It is not uncommon to find texts that show the medieval intellectuals, called scholastics, as theologians who dealt with religion and, at best, when dealing with men, were worried only about

the world of ideas². In this sense, when the lens of contemporary theorists, turn to this time of teaching and learning, they are still shrouded in mist that, often blur the historical meaning of the works and keep them in the darkness of ignorance. Obviously our intention is not to bring light to the debate with the aim of clarifying that the looks of Enlightenment men or the current ones are wrong. If we intended to do that, we would be denying the historian's own work.

Firstly because we agree with Bloch (2001) when he states that the way we view the past says much more about our present than the past, since we are the ones who visit the past and not the contrary. Thus, if we think we are right now and the past is wrong it is because we believe there is a true 'right' in the present. We then have a dogma, not knowledge. Therefore, History starts to be religion and not science. Secondly, we are not the only ones to see the Middle Ages and the scholastic education at the Parisian university as an expression of practical and material life of the thirteenth century men. Many intellectuals did so before us. Incidentally, authors such as Guizot (1857), Tocqueville (1982), Hugon (1998), Grabmann (1949), Chenu (1967), Pieper (1973), Nunes (1979), Steenberghen (1990), Gilson (1995, 1997), Torrell (2004), Le Goff (1984, 1991, 1994), Políbios (1985), De Boni (1996), Lauand (2002), among others, are the basis for our speech. However, most of these authors are in the ambience of history and philosophy and the locus of their speeches have been or are the European universities. With rare exceptions, Brazilian historians are found involved with this reading of medieval education.

Hence, our gaze turns to Aquinas's issues in order to understand History and how he used to insert the social relations of his time in teaching. We do not intend to idealize the master's writings, but also, we do not intend to judge them because, as we have stated elsewhere, we do not judge History. We just look for it to continue keeping it. Our formulations on master Thomas, especially on issues discussed in the text start from the premise that he sought to deal with real men in his lectures and writings.

The two questions that we elected, the 101, on 'Piety', and the 102, on 'Respect', are inserted in part II^a II^{ae} from the main master's work, the *Summa Theologiae*

²An example of this form of interpretation can be found in the recent article by Professors Dermeval Saviani and Newton Duarte. The authors, analyzing aspects of human development from history and philosophy perspectives, recall Marx to explain the thesis that knowledge and training are ruled through material relations among men: "[...] the problem of the possibility to attribute to human thinking an objective truth is not a theoretical problem, but a practical problem. It is in practice that man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and the power of their thought - isolated from practice - is a purely scholastic question" (Marx cited by SAVIANI; DUARTE, 2010, p. 425).

¹The historiography of French eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the Enlightenment and Romantic visions of the Middle Ages'.

(TOMÁS DE AQUINO, 2005). The two issues exemplify the model of education which was held at the University and, at the same time, clarify how the Dominican master, when teaching his students, did not lose sight of the specific problems of his time. Thomas's lessons and writings had as scenario the daily life of one of the most important medieval cities of the West, Paris. This city and its university had a different scenario from that experienced in the feud. These scenes brought a new way of life, in which the social, cultural and knowledge differences were introduced to men. These men needed to teach and learn how to live with them.

Dealing with piety and respect, Master Thomas intends to teach his students the importance of tolerance and respect among people so that life could elapse in the collective space. This intellectual explained the differences between the theoretical concepts taught, that is, Aristotle's and the sacred writings. He also exposed to his students and those who heard him - because this Dominican was a master of the university and a friar preacher - the different levels of relationships that men had with each other, to highlight that the respect owe to parents has a nature, to masters another nature, yet another concerning the ruler, and to God, a fourth. Facing this urban scenario, Thomas showed people that a unique form of relationship no longer existed, but multiples, and each one required, different understandings and attitudes from those who established them.

Life in the city and at the university had become complex, requiring that men had new concepts of social interaction, especially concerning the ruler. They needed, therefore, to learn the art of living together and the art of politics to obey the new social laws. Reflecting on Aquinas's writings it is possible to learn, by means of historical memory, how theorists of other times were able to combine in their writings and teaching the syllabus to be taught and guiding principles of the politics, so important to social life, regardless of historical time. Thus, we will not exalt the Dominican master, but only see him as a master and author of his time, who used the teaching of theology and philosophy, content of his teaching, to lead men in their everyday life, especially within the city.

Concerning the choice of issues for our analysis we highlight the fact that scholars of the master's writings indicate that the writings of this section of the *Summa Theologiae* II^a II^{ae} deal with themes that were defined by the same authors as social virtues, that is, virtues necessary for the life in society.

Although unfamiliar to Thomas's vocabulary the expression 'social virtues' has already received broad

support to designate this section of the *Summa*. It happily indicates the more general feature that links these ten virtues: distinguishing itself from religion, whose object is the relationships with God, which aim at the behavior and relations of society.

[...]

After all, the virtues we define here as 'social', according to the position knowingly adopted by Saint Thomas, are only attached virtues of justice, their prospective parts, and this precisely because they have to do with inequality, in the relations among people and the extent of their rights and character of the obligations deriving from them. This is easily perceived with a mere overview on this set of virtues, and with a simple emphasis to their major articulations. In their distinction and in the disposition which was definitively attributed to them, we see a double principle emerging, intended to sort all the virtues listed as statements of justice, taking into account the criteria mentioned therein.

The first is exactly the principle of inequality, not in the modern sense of inequality of rights in a political society, but one that binds to the roots of social life, when looking at its genesis and progressive constitution. In other words, its history is considered from this nucleus that is the family, and this first unity that is the country, the original place where each one receives life and education. Indeed, the point of ethical reference remains the person. But who will be directly examined in their access to social life and social conviviality as engendered, formed and developed part, thanks to a sharing of gifts and benefits that he/she begins to receive (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, Introd. § 1 to 3).

The translators's comments on the above passage explain the fact that the master worries about understanding how men live in community and highlights the importance of each individual, in the use of their reflexive ability, develop social virtues that make the coexistence of all people possible.

It should be noted that the city ambience where Thomas Aquinas teaches and preaches is composed of different people and the condition for the common experience is the establishment of a balanced social state in which the practice of social virtues would be the basis for establishing fair relations among men. It is important to remember, as the translators of this edition of the *Summa Theologiae* highlight, that the community / city from where the master's discourse comes from, has quite different characteristics from the city we live in today and the sense of inequality the master deals with is also distinct from what we understand in the present. As the medieval society is organized within a hierarchy, differentiation is the essence of the constitution of such society whereas, in ours; the

inequality is explained in the economic and political differences. At the present time, all people are born equal in law and the economic condition is what differentiates one person from another and what defines the social class to which one belongs. At the time of the Dominican master, men were legally different in origin, therefore, by law, unequal. Thus, the place each person occupied in social relations was defined before birth. Such was the condition within the feudal-vassal relations, the law ensured certain privileges and benefits to some people and the rest of the population lived at the mercy of their masters' interests.

However, as cities developed, the trade had even more space and importance in people's lives, schools and universities in the City began to emphasize the teaching of other knowledge, especially the Aristotelian. Thus, the essence of the relationships changed. Although men saw and accepted social differences as 'natural', they needed to live with them daily, and to establish new principles that could provide the maintenance of difference, but which would also guarantee rights for all. It is, therefore, under this scenario that Aquinas presents and discusses the social virtues, especially piety and respect, because they have the fundamentals that would allow a conviviality among the different in the city, with some possibility of harmony in which each one, firming their actions, based on respect and compassion to the other, would build the social contexture common to all. In our view, these virtues are current until today and they are essential to social life.

Therefore, it is important now to be acquainted with Thomas Aquinas's writings.

Question 101 'Mercy /Piety' is presented by the master in four articles: '1) To whom does Piety/mercy extend; 2) What Piety assures to a person; 3) Is Piety/mercy a special virtue? 4) Is it licit to use religion to omit the duties of piety?'

Question 102 about 'Observance/ Respect' is debated from three items: '1) Is observance a special virtue, distinct from other virtues? 2) What does observance consist of? 3) Comparison between observance and piety'. It should be noted herein that even though we have shown these two issues as a cut for our review, we emphasize that not all their articles will be dealt with. Besides, the discussion will not be limited only to these two matters because questions from 101 to 110 of this part of the Summa deal with social virtues and some articles on other issues are going to be presented so that one can better understand the Thomasian debate and teaching can be better understood.

As previously mentioned, the master always relates its formulations to men's real world. Indeed,

there is a concern in his writings that the student, the listener and the reader understand the purpose of his idea and associate it with their actions. In question 103, 'the Dulia'³, for example, when Aquinas reflects on honor, homage to superiors, especially to God and highlights the fact that honor is as important to men as an element of virtue. Honor expresses how virtuous a person is.

According to the Philosopher, honor is not a sufficient reward of virtue: yet nothing in human and corporal things can be greater than honor, since these corporal things themselves are employed as signs in acknowledgment of excelling virtue. It is, however, due to the good and the beautiful, that they may be made known, as it is written, 'Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house.' In this sense honor is said to be the reward of virtue (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, q. 103, art. 1, sol. 2, our underline).

But this virtuosity may not be simply because a person is good and fair. Above all, the individual who receives the honor should be someone who possesses these virtues and experiences them in their surroundings. The 'being' to be honored must be great for the society⁴. This is exactly why Master Thomas compares the honor to a light. The light is only important when it illuminates all those around it.

Regarding the third, it must be said that praise is distinguished from honor in two ways. First, because praise consists only of verbal signs, whereas honor consists of any external signs, so that praise is embedded in honor. Secondly, because by paying honor to a person we bear witness to a person's excelling goodness absolutely, whereas by praising him we bear witness to his goodness in reference to an end: thus we praise one that works well for an end. On the other hand, honor is given even to the best, which is not referred to an end, but has already arrived at the end, according to the Philosopher (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, q. 103, art. 1, sol. 3).

According to the master one can only be honored if he has the light that illuminates the

³Dulia 'servitude, submission'; 'cult to God's servants'. (Houaiss Dictionary, 2001).

⁴It is important to highlight that the debate about the importance of virtue as a condition of life in society does not start with Thomas Aquinas. Several other ancient authors have indicated virtue as the basis of community life. We find these reflections in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In fact, this philosopher validates, largely, the Thomasian thought. In Seneca, Latin author of the first century, it is also addressed. He explains, in the work *Tranquility of Mind*, that virtue is the condition of man living and serving society. Just as Master Thomas, Seneca, centuries before, pointed to the fact that man is virtuous only when he serves the community. "2. This I think ought to be done by virtue and by one who is devoted to the study of virtue. If misfortune prevails and destroys the power of action let him not turn his back at once, and, defenseless, flee seeking a hiding-place, as if there were any place where misfortune could not pursue, but let him engage more discreetly in public duties, and, making a selection, find something in which he may be of use to the state. 3. Is he shut out from rendering military service? Let him aid his fellow-citizens with silent counsel; is it dangerous for him even to enter the forum? Let him show himself a good comrade, a faithful friend, a temperate guest in houses, in theatres, and at feasts. If he has lost the functions of a citizen, let him use those of a man" (SÉNECA, 1973, p. 212).

environment. One can only receive the tribute of honor if, by his virtues, he helps others for his kindness and goodness. Aquinas does not conceive men out of social relations. Following Aristotle's footsteps, he believes that the person exists only in the community, so one who does not help the other, who does not intend by his deeds, the best for him and for others does not deserve the honor.

This understanding of human behavior appears clearly on the first article in Question 101 on 'Mercy/Piety'.

Man becomes a debtor to other men in various ways, according to their various excellence and the various benefits received from them. On both counts God holds first place, for He is supremely excellent, and is for us the first principle of being and government. In the second place, the principles of our being and government are our parents and our country that have given us birth and nourishment. Consequently man is debtor chiefly to his parents and his country, after God. [...] Wherefore just as it belongs to religion to give worship to God, so does it belong to piety, in the second place, to give worship to one's parents and one's country. The worship due to our parents includes the worship given to all our kindred, since our kinsfolk are those who descend from the same parents, according to the Philosopher. The worship given to our country includes homage to all our fellow-citizens and to all the friends of our country. Therefore piety extends chiefly to these (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a, II^{ae}, q. 101, art. 1, reply).

Discussing the intensity and diversity of the relations among people, the Dominican master points to the different levels of behavior and dependence that exist among men in society. According to him, just the fact of living and breathing turns a person into a debtor and dependent on others. However, there is a high variation in these levels of relationships. Men can not connect with God (religiousness) in the same way they live daily with parents (familiar relationships). Hence, they can not have the same behavior they have with their parents when they relate with friends. The act of the person as he/she relates to others than their relatives or friends should be different from that with which he/she is accustomed to practicing in a more reserved environment. Finally, the person's actions must be distinct from all other acts when he/she needs doing something that involves the interests of the motherland.

Indeed, in clarifying that piety / love must be present in all our actions, but their intensity and form are modified according to whom these actions

and feelings are addressed, Master Thomas shows the differences between the private and public ambience. Concerning religion, family and friends, we must behave and devote special feelings. In regard to other people, who we call fellow citizens, as well as the homeland, our actions must have distinct characteristics as they are directed to the public. Thus, in the debate about the devotion of piety Aquinas presents how men's acts should be in one and another space because each one requires specific attitudes.

In this sense, the author points to the fact that living in the city implies the existence of all with all, hence the urgent need of human actions to be guided by mercy, because the existence of all people depends on it. In answering the item number three of the first article, *To whom does piety extend?*, Question '101', the master notes:

As for the third, it must be said that, kindred and citizenship relations refer more to the principles of our existence than to any other kind of relationship. Therefore piety extends not only to one's kindred and fellow-citizens (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, q. 101, art. 1, sol. 3).

According to him, the fact that men live together and mercy/piety is the condition for the existence of people, it becomes special, because it is a condition of men existing collectively. Without mercy, that is to say, without feelings, conviviality among different people is not possible.

Resuming his reflections on human virtues, in the same item, in response to the second article, *Whether piety guarantees support for our parents?* The master points out that, although men should 'love'⁵ all who inhabit the country, they should not serve them with the same intensity. First they must serve their parents and those with whom they have family ties, then, and if and when possible, the other inhabitants.

Regarding the third, As Tully says, 'We offer homage and duty to all our kindred and to the well-wishers of our country'; not, however, equally to all, but chiefly to our parents, and to others according to our means and their personal claims (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, q. 101, art. 2, reply).

It is explicit in the master's passage that he believes that each one should be served according to the intensity of relationships. Therefore he does not propose actions that lead to men's subjection or servitude. The Master's words show that he

⁵Of course, that loving everyone, for Aquinas, is linked to the act of piety, to the sense of tolerance and respect that everyone should devote everyone in the community city. It does not have to do with the idea of filial love or love between couples. It is the necessary affection among men.

understands that society is governed by the differences and that they are part of the individuals' everyday life. What he points out is the necessity of human actions produce a good living within the community. Therefore, people should love their neighbor, but this love is not unconditional subservience. Instead, people should address to each other, as appropriate for collective life.

In response to the third article in 'Question 101', 'Is piety a special virtue?', Aquinas observes that piety is a particular virtue and a condition for social existence, but it is practiced within the uniqueness of each person i.e., from individual acts. However, justice rests with men as universal beings, that is, acts intended to society as a whole and not to private interests. Although it may be performed by a person, its end is the group of men, the country, hence the proper course of justice results in benefit to the community.

As for the third, it must be said that Piety extends itself to the country, whereas country is for us a certain principle of being. Legal justice, however, regards the good of the country as the common to all: wherefore legal justice has more of the character of a general virtue than piety (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, IIa IIae, q. 101, art. 3, reply).

For master Aquinas, piety and justice are fundamental virtues, and without them life in community is not possible. It may also be seen from these formulations that the author thinks man from the new social relations. He defines the society by means of concepts such as city and country. Though he considers the organization of relations from the differences - another reading than that would be impossible for the thirteenth century - the idea of absolute subjection, isolation, 'natural' situation to rural areas, imposed by feudalism, are not consistent with the definitions of the virtues he conveys. The man to whom he addresses and clarifies the importance of acts charged with piety and justice is the city man, inhabitant of the *urbis*, the *commune*.

Indeed, in the cities remain the social differences that existed in the feud among lords, vassals and overlords, but the subordination of some men to others should not only be explained by birth order as presented so far. In this new tumultuous, confusing and diverse city environment, the differences need to be discussed and justified.

This aspect appears clearly when, in Question 102 'Respect/Observance', the Dominican master reflects on the different levels of respect that exist in society. This is, incidentally, the object of the issue. In response to the second solution of the first article, entitled 'Is observance a special virtue, distinct from

other virtues?', he specifies what should be the necessary qualities for the person to have the dignity of their peers.

Regarding the second item, By the very fact of being in a position of dignity a man not only excels as regards his position, but also has a certain power of governing subjects, wherefore it is fitting that he should be considered as a principle inasmuch as he is the governor of others. On the other hand, the fact that a man has perfection of science and virtue does not give him the character of a principle in relation to others, but merely a certain excellence in him. Wherefore a special virtue is appointed for the payment of worship and honor to persons in positions of dignity. Yet, forasmuch as science, virtue and all like things render a man fit for positions of dignity, the respect which is paid to anyone on account of any excellence whatever belongs to the same virtue (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a, II^{ae}, q. 102, art. 1, sol. 2).

The master's words make clear that a person can only be the object of social differentiation and receive the gratitude from the other men, for some excellent quality, for being superior to the others. A man will only be able to govern other men and be subject to reverence if he has special virtues. Among these virtues or qualities, Thomas Aquinas, highlights the science.

In this respect we can infer that, for Aquinas, the chief or leader of a community should not be so as a result of his birth, but of his personal virtue. Evidently the author is not proposing the end of the nobility, because this revolution was not in his purposes. Incidentally, this criticism came only in the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries with the Enlightenment. However, it is undeniable that the master already points to the fact that the 'act' of ruling is not to any person or due to his bloodline, but it is clear that, by a person's status as a virtuous person, he is more able to guide and care for the common good of all, therefore, capable of dignity and honor.

It must be clear that Master Thomas's idea of government is not closely linked to general government, in the political sense, as it is conceived today. For him, every human act comes from government. Natural attitudes that people take daily, result from their particular ability to guide their lives. Hence, Thomas's defense that each man has in himself a unique intellect that guides his actions. Therefore, by the use of this intellect men have free will to control their lives. Ultimately, every person is responsible for the direction of his/her life.

However, as life is collective, the individual act of each one, as mentioned earlier, relates to and

affects the act of another. Then the master highlights, in Question 102, in response to the second article *Whether it belongs to observance to pay worship and honor to those who are in positions of dignity?*, in solutions two and three, one more aspect of the imbricate relationship among men. It is the concept of debt.

Regarding the second, as stated above, debt is twofold. One is legal debt, to pay which man is compelled by law to pay; and thus man owes honor and worship to those persons in positions of dignity who are placed above him. The other is moral debt, which is demanded in terms of honesty: it is how we owe worship and honor to persons in positions of dignity even though we are not their subjects.

As for the third, Honor is due to the excellence of persons in positions of dignity, on account of their higher rank: while fear is due to them on account of the coercive power they hold and to government force they exert it is due both obedience, whereby subjects are moved at the command of their superiors, and tributes, which are a repayment for their labor (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a II^{ae}, q. 102, art. 2, sol. 2 and 3).

Thomas Aquinas presents some conditions in which a man owes another and these conditions undoubtedly remain until these days helping to keep men united. The first is the financial debt or the debt that law requires to be paid therefore it is legal. The second debt, the master defines as moral as it concerns the obligations we all have in relation to the ruler to whom all subjects must pay homage and obedience. As the payment of taxes is tied to the ruler, he also considers that this debt concerns the moral field, because even though everyone knows about the tax payment obligation, its payment, in short, is bound to the honor of fulfilling or not one's public commitments.

In response to the third article of 'Question 102', 'Is observance a greater virtue than piety?' The Dominican master deals with a third kind of debt among men. In our view, this is the most complex, because men in general, regardless of historical time, have difficulty to discern it as it is not always perceived. It is the debt we all have with those to whom we owe something, in relation to the dignity of the person. In this instance, Aquinas elects those who, from his point of view, are the recipients of the debts.

I ANSWER. Something may be paid to persons in positions of dignity in two ways. First, concerning the common good, as when one serves them in the administration of the affairs of the state. This no longer belongs to observance, but to piety, which pays worship not only to one's father but also to

one's fatherland. Secondly, that which is paid to persons in positions of dignity refers specially to their personal usefulness or renown, and this belongs properly to observance, as distinct from piety. Therefore in comparing observance with piety it is necessary to take into consideration the different relations in which other persons stand to us, which relations both virtues regard. Now it is evident that the persons of our parents and of our kindred are more substantially akin to us than persons in positions of dignity, since birth and education, which originate in the father, belong more to one's substance than external government, which has as principle those who are seated in positions of dignity. For this reason piety takes precedence over observance, inasmuch as it pays worship to persons more akin to us, and to whom we are more strictly bound (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a, II^{ae}, q. 102, art. 3, reply).

According to Master Thomas, men in general are obliged to those people who have dignity because their acts are directed to the common good of the group, community / city and country. Concerning these people, the master is not referring specifically to the ruler or leader, though these can be objects of reverence and dignity. Instead, he addresses ordinary people who, by their acts for the benefit of someone or a group, individually or collectively benefit the people. Master Aquinas, inclusive, exemplifies with the father and kinship figures. Moreover, for the Dominican master, people owe more to parents and relatives than to the authorities and people of their external 'relationships'. In face of this comparison in 'relation' to the levels of dignity he uses to differentiate to whom men devote piety or respect. The master remembers that all people need to respect each other to live in community, since the virtues of compassion and respect ensure harmony in social relations. However, Aquinas points out that piety, when directed to people who are close to us, is superior to respect, because one loves more, and has more obligations to those with whom he has closer ties.

In the debate about these three kinds of debt, the master points his formulations to the need for men to commit acts that are consistent with the common life. In this regard, people should know that, at different levels, all have some kind of debt to others and in fulfilling them they need to make use of piety and respect.

Of course, the example of the differences in the levels of social debt is just one among many others that Master Thomas explains. However, in his writings on the virtues, a central thread guides his ideas: that man is free to make choices and to act. This formulation is explicit in the solution of the first article of Question 104 'Obedience' 'Whether a man is bound to obey another?'

Regarding the first reply, God left man in the hand of his own counsel, not as though it were lawful to him to do whatever he will, but because, unlike irrational creatures, he is not compelled by natural necessity to do what he ought to do, but is left the free choice proceeding from his own counsel. And just as he has to proceed on his own counsel in doing other things, so too has he in the point of obeying his superiors. For Gregory says, 'When we humbly give way to another's voice, we overcome ourselves in our own hearts.'

Regarding the second, The will of God is the first rule whereby all rational wills are regulated: and to this rule one will approaches more than another, according to a divinely appointed order. Hence the will of the one man who issues a command may be as a second rule to the will of this other man who obeys him.

Regarding the third reply, A thing may be deemed gratuitous in two ways. In one way on the part of the deed itself, because, one is not bound to do it; in another way, on the part of the doer, because he does it of his own free will. Now a deed is rendered virtuous, praiseworthy and meritorious, chiefly according as it proceeds from the will. Wherefore although obedience is a duty, if one obeys with a prompt will, one's merit is not for that reason diminished, especially before God, Who sees not only the outward deed, but also the inward will. (TOMÁS DE AQUINO, II^a, II^{ae}, q. 104, art. 1, sol. 1, 2 and 3).

This passage from Thomas Aquinas explicitly states that, from the author's point of view, man is responsible for his acts and for being a 'being' who has intellect, and he can therefore make use of reason. So, it is expected that he has intelligence to do what is right and correct and that his actions express his will. But this must always be the result of reason. By using the intellect, man can advise himself, can always know what to do regardless of others. Thus, if a man submits to another, by choice, with full use of his reason, this obedience is the best to him. Otherwise, using his intellectual conditions, he would not submit to something or another man if, in principle, this relationship would be harmful to him. In turn, if he, who controls, also makes the full use of reason, he does not produce tyranny, but by having special virtues, such as 'dignity', 'science' and 'honor,' he may command and be obeyed. From the master's standpoint, a work is only well performed when it is the expression of will of its maker. Everything done in the absence of the will does not express the good, but subjection and denial of the intellect. He who does not drive his actions, by means of the intellect, can not be considered a person because he does not resemble God, but rather resembles the irrationals who do not

have wills, only needs. For Aquinas, man is the image of God only when he has self willingness and it defines his path.

Final considerations

In discoursing on the virtues of Piety and Respect, master Thomas Aquinas pointed out, for the men of his time, that people's ordinary life requires a series of behaviors that are consistent with the interests of the community and that these behaviors involve a political living. From the author's point of view, all people must make it clear or, as we say nowadays, be aware that their single actions interfere in the natural universal experience of everyone in the community. The Dominican master's concern focused on the fact that city life demanded from each one, a donation and self-denial level of the individual wills to which medieval men were not accustomed. For Aquinas, the collective life is made of concessions, but these may not reflect the abandonment of will or submission. Rather, it is by being aware that they belong to a common ambience that men need to use their intellect.

It should be noted that Thomasian ideas direct us to burning issues of his time. As men were beginning to live in cities, it was necessary to create in them habits of social life that previously they did not have because they were not needed. It was with the intention to point to these habits that the master sought to teach virtues that developed those new behaviors in people. He also tried to make it clear to men that 'Piety' (mercy and love to neighbor) is not only a feeling coming from religion, but a condition for the existence of society. 'Respect' is not synonymous of subjection and servitude, but a condition for harmony and tolerance, which are essential to ordinary life. Differences among people are inherent in men, because although they are all beings who possess intellect, consequently equal, each individual has unique natural features that make them different. However, Thomas Aquinas had already warned, in the thirteenth century, that the social diversity among men is the result of the condition and the role that each person plays in society and not a result of birth, as medieval men were accustomed to believe. This position was clarified in several Thomas Aquinas' quotations presented here, like in 'honor', 'dignity', 'debt'. Let us not forget that the master also pointed to the different levels of people's relationships and actions, which was clearly outlined, that the collective ambience of the city required the separation between private life and public life.

Finally, resuming the dialogue with history, we hope to have succeeded in clarifying that the Thomasian writings, example and model of the theory and scholastic method, dealt directly with real men's

issues. In the last quote of the text, for example, when Master Thomas talks about the freedom that man has to act, by means of intellect, he makes explicit what is most real and practical in man, the free will with which he decides all his deeds and wills. However, we only grasp these Thomasian formulations if we consider them with our own lenses and if we deduce from his writings how much he was referring to urban men in their surroundings. We shall turn Master Thomas' writings in history and follow his advice. We shall read his texts making use of freedom and will, as intellectual beings we are, examining them with the eyes of our time and not as the eighteenth century authors. If we do this, we will realize that he has plenty to teach us and we have a lot to learn, because his writings are part of the past and they do not threaten us. To follow History and make it our craft, we need to have our own lenses and with them read other times in History. But when we wear the lenses of other times, not ours, we incur in two serious dangers: 1) we do not understand the past; 2) we become judges of this past. In both situations, we abandon History.

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