

Moral Hope: Aquinas and Cajetan on Magnanimity¹

NICHOLAS AUSTIN, S.J.
Campion Hall, University of Oxford
Oxford, England

IT IS LAMENTABLE that the concept of magnanimity has largely retired from active service in our moral discourse. Anodyne labels such as “self-esteem,” and even old expressions for vices, like “ambition” and “pride,” often act as quasi-virtue terms; “magnanimity,” with its deep genealogy, languishes.

Yet one may well hesitate to recall magnanimity to active duty. Today we are unclear what magnanimity is, and the vague idea we have of it leaves us unsure of its ethical credentials. Aristotle’s classic portrayal of this virtue of greatness gives the impression of an elitist, aristocratic ideal.² The magnanimous man has a high opinion of his greatness. He is conscious of the rewards, especially those of status and wealth, that are due to him. From his perch of isolated independence, he looks down on his many inferiors. John Casey opines, “it goes without saying that [Aristotle’s magnanimous man] is directly opposed to Christian humility.”³ Even Alasdair MacIntyre, one of the best-known advocates for the retrieval of Aristotelian virtue, consistently complains that Aristotle’s magnanimous man is guilty of “an illusion of self-sufficiency . . . all too characteristic of

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Heythrop College, London, Summer Conference “Let Him Easter in Us,” July 5, 2018, and the Aquinas Seminar Series, Blackfriars, University of Oxford, February 20, 2019. My thanks for those who offered responses and comments.

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [NE] 4.3.1123b–4.3.4.1125b; translations are taken from *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1999).

³ John Casey, *Pagan Virtue: An Essay in Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 200.

the rich and powerful in many times and places.”⁴

Magnanimity’s few champions today often turn to Thomas Aquinas to answer the charge of moral elitism.⁵ Aquinas brilliantly places the apparently opposed virtues of magnanimity and humility in mutually interpretive dialectic.⁶ These two habits work in contrariwise directions: humility tempers the will for an arduous good; magnanimity fosters it. Yet they meet in the rational mean, since both rest on self-knowledge, whether of weakness or worth.⁷ The marriage of this unlikely couple corrects both the self-effacement that masquerades as humility and the presumptuous pride with which magnanimity is easily confused. “Humble magnanimity,” therefore, names a dynamic tension between contrasting moral qualities that cannot rightly be conceived without each other.

To ready magnanimity for a return to vigorous duty, however, requires more than its reconciliation with humility. Still required is a cogent account of what exactly magnanimity is, and why today we should acknowledge it as a virtue. In this essay, I seek to show that magnanimity is both intelligible and attractive when understood as a quality of *moral hope*. To analyze magnanimity, I work from the principle that Aquinas lays down when he defines virtue in the *Summa theologiae* [ST]: “The complete concept of

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 1999), 126–27. See also: MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), 51; 169; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 182.

⁵ Some take Aquinas to show that Aristotle’s version of magnanimity can be defended without significant change: David A. Horner, “What It Takes to Be Great: Aristotle and Aquinas on Magnanimity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 15, no. 4 (1998): 415–44; Lindsay K. Cleveland, “A Defense of Aristotelian Magnanimity Against the Pride Objection with the Help of Aquinas,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 88 (2014): 259–71. Gregory Pine argues that, while humility is foreign to Aristotle’s thought, in Aquinas’s ethics it “does not run roughshod” over Aristotelian magnanimity (“Magnanimity and Humility according to St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 82, no. 2 [April 2018]: 286). Others claim that the marriage of magnanimity with Christian humility significantly corrects and transforms Aristotle: Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, “Aquinas’s Virtues of Acknowledged Dependence: A New Measure of Greatness,” *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (April 2004): 214–27; Mary M. Keys, “Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity,” *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 1 (2003): 37–65.

⁶ See especially Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] II-II, q. 129, a. 3; q. 161, a. 1.; q. 162, a. 1, ad 3.

⁷ ST II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad 3.

anything is gathered from all its causes.”⁸ I have argued elsewhere that this principle entails a fruitful “causal” approach to delineating the contours of a specific virtue by identifying its causal principles (material, formal, final, and efficient).⁹ I therefore offer a definition by identifying what the virtue is about (matter), what work the virtue does in this sphere (mode), which persons bear it (subject), what target it is directed toward (object), and what brings it about (efficient cause). At its core, I argue, is the well-ordered hope for excellent moral agency.

In my argument I draw generously, and perhaps controversially, from significant figures in the Thomist tradition, especially Thomas de Vio Cajetan († 1534).¹⁰ I find the turn to tradition necessary because of an especially intractable problem I encountered in my attempt to causally analyze the virtue of great-heartedness. The aporia concerns magnanimity’s very object: to what great things does the virtue of greatness tend? The classical sources are marked by a disconcerting ambivalence on this question.¹¹ Even in Aquinas, magnanimity can seem shockingly Janus-faced, appearing first as an Aristotelian orientation to great honor and then as a Ciceronian aspiration to great moral achievement.¹² It is unclear which of these two dispositions is more essential, how they are related, and even whether they are mutually compatible. A promising resolution, both to the theoretical problem about magnanimity’s nature and to the hermeneutical question of how to read the text, lies in Cajetan’s “very luminous commentary”¹³ on Aquinas’s first article on magnanimity in *ST*. My own account of magnanimity’s twofold object follows Cajetan’s analysis but also raises—and attempts to resolve causally—a serious objection that

⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 55, a. 4, resp.: “Perfecta enim ratio uniuscuiusque rei colligitur ex omnibus causis eius.” All translations from Latin and French texts are my own. Latin text of Aquinas is from corpus Thomisticum.org.

⁹ Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading*, Moral Traditions (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ Also helpful are the accounts of magnanimity by the Carmelites of Salamanca (Salmanticenses) and, in the twentieth century, by René Antoine Gauthier and Josef Pieper. I read these thinkers not as unquestioned authorities, but as allies in the investigation of this confusing but intriguing virtue.

¹¹ The history of magnanimity from ancient thought to the thirteenth century is traced by Gauthier in *Magnanimité: l'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne* (Paris: Vrin, 1951).

¹² For Cicero’s account of magnanimity, see especially *De officiis*, 1.20.66–67, in Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library 30 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 68–69.

¹³ This is Henri-Dominique Noble’s phrase in *Somme théologique: la force 2a-2ae, questions 123–140*, trans. J.-D. Folghera (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1926), 293.

Cajetan does not seem to notice. Cajetan's account is worth defending because his subtle analysis, by relegating the well-ordered desire for honor to an entirely subordinate place in the virtue, illumines magnanimity as, at core, a lively hope for excellent moral agency.

Second, to deepen the analysis of magnanimity as what I am calling a "moral" hope, I argue for this virtue's primary affinity not with humility, but with the theological virtue of hope. The Christian ethic understands the moral subject as a pilgrim, guided and aided by grace, on the way to eternal life. Aquinas's perspective of Christian hope cannot but place the virtue of great-spiritedness in a new light: magnanimity becomes the quality by which we lean on others' friendship and God's help to attain a steep moral good, rising above the minimal requirements of the moral law. Magnanimity's deep causal structure therefore reflects the hope by which we journey to life with God. More than the other moral virtues, magnanimity is a participant in theological hope, *participans aliquid a spe*, as Aquinas puts it.¹⁴ Once recognized to be an earthly complement to the theological hope that orients us to eternal beatitude, magnanimity's intelligibility and appeal, as a virtue of moral hope, need no longer be in doubt.

What's in a Word

Since the idea of magnanimity barely functions in our moral discourse today, contemporary usage stands as a poor signpost to the virtue. Admittedly, relics of a former concept do remain. We may praise someone for their magnanimous generosity and admire sports men and women who are magnanimous in victory or defeat. However, to laud someone for their magnanimity today insinuates moral superiority. "How magnanimous of you!" rarely conveys anything other than a backhanded compliment.

Where contemporary usage fails, etymology is a more promising guide, as it speaks from a richer tradition before its modern decline. Aquinas himself recognizes the value of etymology in understanding specific virtues, seeing a virtue's name as a sign of its nature.¹⁵ He often uses etymological analysis when he inquires into a virtue or vice.¹⁶ His simple but incisive etymology of *magnanimitas* asserts: "Magnanimity from its name implies a certain stretching of the *animus* toward great things [*magna*]."¹⁷

¹⁴ *In III sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4.

¹⁵ *ST II-II*, q. 157, a. 3.

¹⁶ For example: *ST II-II*, q. 49, a. 6; q. 123, a.2; q. 134, a. 2; q. 141, aa. 1–2.; q. 151, a. 2; q. 152, a. 4.

¹⁷ *ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 1, resp.: "Magnanimitas ex suo nomine importat quandam extensionem animi ad magna."

Only significant labor can clarify Aquinas's condensed formula. It breaks down into its "causal" components as follows:

a certain stretching	of the <i>animus</i> toward	great things
<i>quaedam extensio</i>	<i>animi ad</i>	<i>magna</i>
mode	matter	object

I leave *animus* untranslated for now because, in Aquinas's Latin, *animus* may refer to any one of several components of the human person, such as soul, mind, heart, or spirit. In this context, I shall argue, it has a more specific, technical meaning. *Magna* means "great things"; as a substantive adjective, however, it leaves open which things are considered great: works, honors, or other external goods. Whatever is the *animus*, and whatever are the great things to which it is directed, magnanimity is a certain stretching of the *animus* toward these great things. Only the elucidation of each element will lead to a full, causal definition.

Lost in Translation: Magnanimity's Subjective Matter

It is difficult to start a game of baseball without first finding the ballpark in which to play it. Similarly, to define a virtue, one must first circumscribe the matter upon which the virtue operates: what the virtue forms and perfects in the human soul. Only once the matter is correctly identified can the definitional game begin.

Magnanimity is a certain stretching of the *animus* toward great things. Aquinas also says, "we call someone magnanimous principally because he has an *animus* toward some great act."¹⁸ Again: "Magnanimity is called a greatness, as it were, of *animus*."¹⁹ The *animus* here refers to the virtue's subject or subjective matter (*materia in qua*, to use Aquinas's technical vocabulary).²⁰ What, though, is the *animus*?

Two commonly proposed candidates can be excluded. The older Dominican translation uses "mind" for *animus*.²¹ This may unwittingly follow David Hume's use of "greatness of mind" as a synonym for "magnanimity."²² As a translation for Aquinas's Latin, it cannot work. For Aquinas

¹⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, resp.: "Principaliter dicitur aliquis magnanimus quod animum habet ad aliquem magnum actum."

¹⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, obj. 1: "Magnanimitas dicitur quasi magnitudo animi."

²⁰ On virtue's subjective matter, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 131–33.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger, 1947).

²² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 592–601 (pt. III, sect. 2).

nas, magnanimity is a moral virtue, a virtue of appetite, not of mind. Magnanimity is misrepresented, then, as “a stretching forth of the mind to great things.” Others use “great-souled” as a synonym for “magnanimous.” Yet we know that, when it comes to defining virtues, Aquinas is too precise to use a general term when a more specific term can be found.²³ “Soul” is a poor translation of *animus* in Aquinas’s formula, since all the virtues are seated in the soul; consequently, “soul” is too generic to name a virtue’s specific subject.

While Aquinas does often use *animus* quite broadly in some contexts, a stricter meaning emerges from his characterizations of three closely connected virtues: humility, magnanimity, and fortitude.²⁴ Humility, Aquinas says, “tempers and restrains the *animus*, lest it tend immoderately to high things.”²⁵ Magnanimity, by contrast, “strengthens the *animus* against despair and urges it on to the pursuit of great things according to right reason.”²⁶ Finally, Aquinas speaks of a brave person as having a strong *animus* in the face of the dangers of death.²⁷ Indeed: “Fortitude strengthens the *animus* of a human against the greatest dangers, namely, mortal dangers.”²⁸ In sum, then: humility *restrains* and *tempers* the *animus* so that it does not overreach itself; magnanimity *drives* and *stretches* the *animus* to reach for great things, and *strengthens* it against hopelessness or giving up; and fortitude *strengthens* the *animus* in the face of mortal danger. From these three virtues, and their diverse “modes” or ways of dealing with the *animus*, the *animus* emerges as an active, forceful part of the soul that needs, by turns, to be tempered by humility, stretched by magnanimity, and strengthened by fortitude.

Aquinas himself may have puzzled over how to define *animus*. Certainly, Aristotle’s explication of magnanimity does not offer much help. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*—in the Latin translation that Aquinas uses—the

²³ For example, Aquinas corrects Augustine’s use of “quality” to define the genus of a virtue because “habit” is more precise (*ST* I-II, q. 55, a. 4, resp.).

²⁴ Magnanimity and humility concern the same matter and are so intertwined that Aquinas refers to them as a *duplex virtus*, a twofold virtue (*ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.). Magnanimity is a “potential part” of fortitude (*ST* II-II, q. 128, a. 1), since it shares in the mode of this cardinal virtue but applies it to a connected but different moral sphere.

²⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.: “... temperet et refrenet animum, ne immoderate tendat in excelsa.”

²⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.: “... firmit animum contra desperationem, et impellit ipsum ad prosecutionem magnorum secundum rationem rectam.”

²⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 61, a. 4, ad 1.

²⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 123, a. 5, resp.: “Fortitudo confirmat animum hominis contra maxima pericula, quae sunt pericula mortis.”

Philosopher begins his treatment of magnanimity by explaining *magna*, yet curiously staying silent about *animus*.²⁹

I argue that Aquinas finds the solution not in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but in Aristotle's *De anima*. At the very start of his treatment of magnanimity in *ST*, Aquinas notes the following:

Animus refers to the irascible power, as is clear in *De anima* III, where the Philosopher says that desire and *animus*, that is, the concupiscible and irascible, are in the sensitive appetite.³⁰

This observation is easily missed since it comes in an objection. Yet the reply to the objection does not dispute the reference of *animus*. The text from *De anima* enables Aquinas to assign a strict meaning to *animus* in the definitions of magnanimity, humility, and fortitude, identifying their common subject: the capacity for irascible or spirited passion.³¹

Further qualification is necessary to identify magnanimity's specific subject with precision. The irascible appetite, for Aquinas, is strictly a part of the sensitive appetite, the capacity for passion, rather than of the intellectual appetite or will. Aquinas notes, however, that speaking less strictly, the will also has an irascible quality when directed toward a challenging object.³² Indeed, theological hope subsists in the irascible will alone, since its object is a difficult intelligible good, an *arduuum intelligibile*, which only the intellect can present to the appetite.³³ It is necessary to determine, then, whether magnanimity dwells in the irascible sensitive appetite alone, or, like theological hope, in the irascible will.

The seventeenth-century Carmelites of Salamanca speculate that there are two magnanimities, each with its respective subject. *Acquired* magnanimity concerns sensible honors, and so must exist in the irascible sensitive appetite, whereas *infused* magnanimity concerns spiritual honors, and so must be located in the will.³⁴ This seems unduly dualistic, even if one

²⁹ For Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's Latin text, see *In IV eth.*, lecs. 8–12.

³⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, obj. 1: "Animus autem pro vi irascibili ponitur, ut patet in III de anima, ubi philosophus dicit quod in sensitivo appetitu est desiderium et animus, idest concupiscibilis et irascibilis."

³¹ For confirmation, see, e.g., *ST* I-II, q. 60, a. 5, resp.

³² *ST* I, q. 82, a. 5.

³³ *ST* II-II, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1.

³⁴ Salmanticenses, *Cursus theologicus*, vol. 12, *Arbor Praedicamentalis*, no. 100, in *Cursus theologicus summam theologicam angelici doctoris D. Thomae complectens*, vol. 6, *Tractatus 11: De bonitate et malitia humanorum actuum; Tractatus 12: De virtutibus—Arbor praedicamentalis* (Paris: V. Palme, 1878).

straightforwardly accepts the division between moral virtues acquired by practice and those infused through grace (more of which later). Acquired magnanimity is directed to great moral goods that are not directly sensible, and so cannot be confined to the sensible irascible alone. Moreover, magnanimity as such conveys a visceral pursuit of arduous goods, so even its infused variety could not be located in the will alone.

Thus, while Aquinas thinks a virtue cannot coexist in two powers equally,³⁵ we need to see magnanimity, whether acquired or infused, as spanning both irascible appetite and will. Textual support for this interpretation can be derived from Aquinas's treatment of the vice of pride. Pride's subject must bridge both kinds of irascible appetite, since one can be prideful about one's excellence in either sensible or spiritual matters (one's imagined physical beauty or alleged moral virtue, for example).³⁶ Now, Cajetan points out that humility, as a virtue opposed to pride, must similarly exist in both kinds of irascible appetite.³⁷ The same argument applies to magnanimity: as a virtue opposed to pride,³⁸ magnanimity must therefore similarly bridge both appetitive powers. The subject of magnanimity, the *animus*, is a capacity for both irascible passion and irascible voluntary commitment in the pursuit of an arduous good.

It is now possible to reconsider fitting synonyms. "Mind" and "soul," the commonly proposed translations, limp badly as proxies for *animus*. Both fail to pick out magnanimity's specific subject, the irascible potency of sensitive and intellective appetite. The English "animus" would be a tempting translation were it not for its connotation of hostility, even malice. A more plausible suggestion is found in the more recent Dominican translation of *ST*: "Magnanimity by definition implies a certain aspiration of spirit to great things."³⁹ "Spirit," is better than "mind" or "soul," since it conveys the virtue's dynamic force and aspirational character. An alternative is "heart," as found in phrases such as "don't lose heart" or "put your heart into it." Indeed, the dictionary records "big-heartedness" as a

³⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 56, a. 2, resp.

³⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 162, a. 3, resp.

³⁷ Cajetan, *Commentary on ST* II-II, q. 162, a. 2, nos. 2 and 3, in Thomas Aquinas, *Opera Omnia, Iussu Impensaque Leonis XIII. P.M. Edita*, vol. 10 (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1899), 316–17. All texts from Cajetan's commentary are taken from the Leonine edition.

³⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad 3.

³⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Vol. 42, Courage: (2a2ae. 123–140)*, ed. Anthony Ross and P. G. Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99.

synonym for magnanimity.⁴⁰ The magnanimous one is less accurately the great-souled than the great-spirited or big-hearted one.

“A Small Bit of Grammar”: Magnanimity’s Objective Matter

The magnanimous one’s *animus* is an *animus ad magna*. Fergus Kerr comments on Aquinas’s use of the Latin preposition *ad*: “A small bit of grammar carries a good deal of theology.”⁴¹ Kerr’s observation arises in a different context but is no less valid here in the discussion of magnanimity. *Ad* means “toward,” and conveys movement in the direction of some object. This is a vital clue in the search for magnanimity’s objective matter (*materia circa quam*), the specific cognitive or appetitive acts the virtue guides and regulates.⁴²

A virtue’s objective matter is always a more specific determination of its subjective matter, since the former is an act of the latter.⁴³ Given that its subject is the irascible power, magnanimity must regulate some specific irascible passion or passions. Irascible passions, however, can be vectors toward or away from their challenging object. Some move toward a good difficult to attain, or an evil difficult to defeat; some fly from an evil one must work to avoid. Magnanimity pursues more than runs from its object.⁴⁴ It strengthens its bearer in the pursuit of goods.⁴⁵ Its objective matter is therefore the irascible movement *toward* some arduous good, an appetitive motion characterized by the mode of impulsion.⁴⁶ The magnanimous one’s great *animus*, then, is a salmon-like desire straining for a demanding goal. Its *animus* is *animus ad*.

More specifically, as an irascible passion directed toward some object, *animus ad* can be narrowed to three candidates: daring, anger, and hope. *Daring* aggressively and boldly approaches some imminent danger to overcome it.⁴⁷ *Anger* aims toward some harmful human and toward vindi-

⁴⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. “Magnanimity” (online edition available at dictionary.oed.com).

⁴¹ Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 124.

⁴² On a virtue’s objective matter, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 111–12.

⁴³ *ST* II-II, q. 58, a. 4, resp: “A power is a virtue’s subject when that virtue is ordered to rectifying that power’s act [*illa potentia est subiectum virtutis ad cuius potentiae actum rectificandum virtus ordinatur*].”

⁴⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, obj. 3.

⁴⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad 2.

⁴⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp. and ad 3.

⁴⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 45, aa. 1–2.

cation.⁴⁸ *Hope*, in contrast, targets a future good that it is difficult but possible to attain, *bonum futurum arduum possibile*.⁴⁹ Since these different irascible passions have diverse objects, different virtues are required to rectify them: “Fortitude is about fear and daring; magnanimity is about hope and despair; gentleness is about anger.”⁵⁰ Aquinas therefore names the magnanimous one’s *animus ad* as a hope: “Magnanimity is properly about the hope for something arduous.”⁵¹

Hope, for Aquinas, is a passion, a movement of the appetite. While depending on the prior judgment that some future good is attainable, it refers strictly to the appetitive response to that judgment: “Hope is a motion of the appetitive power following the apprehension of an arduous future good as possible to attain, namely, the stretching of the appetite to an object of this sort.”⁵² The high-strung passion of hope therefore has an intrinsic directionality toward action. Because directed to a future good, hope is, as Charles Pinches observes, “inherently ‘tensed.’ Its action does not so much cause us to partake as to pursue.”⁵³ The intense passion of hope to which Aquinas refers does not sit on the sidelines in wistful sanguinity but impels a person toward the attainment of a challenging, future good. As René Antoine Gauthier expresses it, “because it has first measured the possibilities, hope and hope alone can command the action; it is the driving passion *par excellence*.”⁵⁴

Magnanimity, then, is *ordo spei*, a right ordering of active and assertive hope. More precisely still, magnanimity deals in an especially hardy way of hoping that Aquinas names *fiducia*. This may be translated as “confidence,” since both terms have an etymological origin in *fides*, or faith.⁵⁵ Confi-

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 46, a. 2.

⁴⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 40, a. 5, resp.

⁵⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 60, a. 4, resp.: “Fortitudo circa timores et audacias; magnanimitas circa spem et desperationem; mansuetudo circa iras.”

⁵¹ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, resp.: “Magnanimitas proprie est circa spem alicuius ardui.”

⁵² *ST* I-II, q. 40, a. 2, resp.: “Spes est motus appetitivae virtutis consequens apprehensionem boni futuri ardui possibilis adipisci, scilicet extensio appetitus in huiusmodi obiectum.”

⁵³ Charles Pinches, “On Hope,” in *Virtues and Their Vices*, ed. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 351.

⁵⁴ Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 332.

⁵⁵ Aquinas considers following Cicero in identifying confidence with magnanimity. He takes Cicero to characterize confidence as follows: “Confidence is that by which the *animus* applies itself to great and honorable enterprises with great confidence and hope in oneself [Fiducia est per quam magnis et honestis rebus multum ipse animus in se fiducia cum spe collocavit].” Cicero’s actual text reads differently: “Fidentia [not *fiducia*] est per quam magnis et honestis in rebus multum ipse

dence is *robur spei*, a strength of hope, or alternatively *spes roborata*, a hope strengthened by some belief or strong conviction.⁵⁶ It is from *robur* that we get the English “robust.” In its root meaning it refers to a hardwood, such as oak. The confidence characteristic of magnanimity is therefore a robust hope, a hardwood hope. Its oak-like sturdiness is based upon the faith or strong conviction that one can attain some good, whether by oneself, through one’s friends, or by the help of God.⁵⁷ Magnanimity’s immediate and direct objective matter lies in a confidence or robust hope: hope, both as a passion and as a commitment of the will, for the attainment of some arduous and great future good.

Tuning and Tuning Forks: Magnanimity’s Mode

A piano tuner’s job is to tighten each string neither too much nor too little, to ensure it reaches its correction tension and so plays at perfect pitch. Similarly, if magnanimity’s matter is a person’s confident hope in her power to attain great and difficult goods, then the virtue’s mode, the work it does to rectify this matter, is to leave it neither too tight nor too slack.

Aquinas names magnanimity’s mode with the phrase *quaedam extensio*: a *certain* stretching of the *animus* to great things. The qualifier is indeterminate but not redundant: magnanimity is not just any kind of extension of the *animus*, but a certain or specific kind. It is, in fact, a reasonable one. Magnanimity drives or urges on (*impellit*) the *animus*, he says, in accordance with right reason.⁵⁸ Even though it aims at great things, magnanimity aims at the mean, since it tends to great things “according to the rule of reason, that is, where it is fitting, and when it is fitting, and for the reason that it is fitting.”⁵⁹ As Aquinas puts it in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, “the magnanimous one tends to great things *moderately*.”⁶⁰ The work that magnanimity does with the hope for

animus in se fiducia certa cum spe collocavit.” (*De inventione* 2.163, in Cicero, *On Invention, The Best Kind of Orator, Topics*, trans. H. M. Hubbell [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949], 330). In any case, Aquinas prefers to say that confidence *belongs to* rather than *is* magnanimity. See *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, resp.

⁵⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, resp. and ad 3.

⁵⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, resp.: “Confidence implies a certain strength of hope arising from some consideration that produces a strong conviction about attaining some good [Fiducia importat quoddam robur spei proveniens ex aliqua consideratione quae facit vehementem opinionem de bono assequendo].”

⁵⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.

⁵⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 64, a. 1, ad 2: “. . . secundum regulam rationis, idest ubi oportet, et quando oportet, et propter quod oportet.”

⁶⁰ *In II sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 4: “Magnanimus *mediocriter* tendit in magna” (emphasis added).

great things is to stretch and urge it on, not excessively, but reasonably.

A rational and measured stretch of the *animus* is one that is proportionate to the capacities of the agent, *secundum proportionem ad propriam facultatem*.⁶¹ Magnanimity therefore stands in the mean between vices that get the proportion wrong, either overextending or underextending the *animus*. Each of these vices is exemplified, for Aquinas, by a biblical figure or character. The vice of presumption is exemplified by Peter before the Passion thinking he can suffer with Christ (Luke 22:33). This vice aims at great things disproportionate to the agent's capacity or virtue, thus exceeding magnanimity's due mode.⁶² Pusillanimity is exemplified by the servant in the parable who buried his talent in the ground (Matt 25:18; Luke 19:20). This vice has an atrophied *animus*, one that is cut down or prostrate, *deicitur*.⁶³ In each case, the agent's aim lacks proportion to the agent's capacity or worth. Presumption and pusillanimity are both moral failures because both contrary, albeit in opposite ways, to the natural inclination to undertake an action commensurate to one's potential.⁶⁴ In contrast, the magnanimous one's self-conception of her own worth or dignity is correct: *secundum dignitatem seipsum dignificat*.⁶⁵ Grounded in this veridical self-image, she hopes and acts accordingly. The correct self-perception of one's dignity, potential, or virtue, then, is like the tuning fork for magnanimity, which is a well-tuned *animus* for great things.

Hope is not the only string magnanimity needs to tune. As noted above, Aquinas says that magnanimity is about the passion of despair as well as that of hope.⁶⁶ Magnanimity's mode must therefore be twofold: it does not merely stretch the *animus* to great things; it also "strengthens the *animus* against despair or giving up."⁶⁷ "Despair" (*desperatio*) here does not name the vice opposed to theological hope, but simply an appetitive movement contrary to the passion of hope, a withdrawal from the striving for some goal in the light of its perceived difficulty or impossibility.⁶⁸ Not all despair, in this sense, is vicious, since it is reasonable to give up when a finite goal proves to be beyond reach and it would be obstinate to persist. Nevertheless, despair is a significant threat to magnanimous agency. Any hopeful pursuer of an arduous good risks losing heart in the face of labor

⁶¹ *ST* II-II, q. 130, a. 2, resp.

⁶² *ST* II-II, q. 130, a. 2, resp. and ad 3.

⁶³ *ST* II-II, q. 133, a. 1, resp.; a. 2, ad 3.

⁶⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 133, a. 1, resp.

⁶⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 3, resp.

⁶⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 60, a. 4, resp.

⁶⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.

⁶⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 40, a. 4.

and obstacles. What starts as a great-spirited quest can easily run ashore on the sands of pusillanimity or smallness of *animus*. Great-heartedness, therefore, must not merely drive the *animus* toward great things, but also brace it against precipitous despair.⁶⁹

Who can be Great? Magnanimity's Personal Subject

The irascible power is named as magnanimity's "subject" only in an analogical sense. Virtues' primary bearers or subjects are not powers of the soul, but persons.⁷⁰ Who, then, can possess magnanimity? There are dangers on either side: to restrict the magnanimity's potential bearers too stingily, thereby falling into elitism, or to open the class too liberally, thus negating the uncommon greatness of this virtue.

If the agent is "great" and thinks, desires, and acts accordingly, says Aquinas, he will be magnanimous; if he is not great, but thinks, desires, and acts according to his lesser worth, he will be "temperate."⁷¹ This apparently introduces an Aristotelian exclusivism into the virtue. Only the few are great. Not all can be magnanimous, even if they have appropriate self-worth and set their aim proportionately. Aquinas moderates this exclusion, to some extent, by appealing to grace as the principle of virtue.⁷² All who have grace and prudence can be magnanimous according to habit and proximate disposition, if not according to act: the "temperate" one *would* act magnanimously if he had the capacity to do so. No one is systematically excluded from the potential to be magnanimous in habit.

Aquinas's qualification of Aristotle's elitism, while moving in the right direction, falls disappointingly short. One may dare here to ask Aquinas to spur Aquinas on further. Commenting on the injunction of Ephesians to "walk in a manner worthy of the vocation to which you have been called" (Eph 4:1), Aquinas glosses:

Attending to the dignity to which you have been called, you should walk according to what agrees with it. For if someone had been called to be a noble King, it would be unworthy for him to do the works of a peasant. Thus, the Apostle admonishes the Ephesians, as if he were to say: "You have been called as fellow citizens

⁶⁹ ST I-II, q. 60, a. 4, resp.; II-II, q. 161, a. 1, resp.

⁷⁰ A soul's power or capacity is the subject *by which* the virtue is possessed (*subiectum quo*), whereas the person is the subject *that* has a virtue (*subiectum quod*). See Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 131.

⁷¹ ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, obj. 2 and ad 2.

⁷² ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad 2.

with the saints of God's household." (Eph 2:19)⁷³

The Christian vocation reveals the greatness to which all are called. As Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung suggests, "Christian magnanimity is not only for a male, upper-class, moral elite; great acts are now open to anyone willing to answer God's call and accept his grace."⁷⁴ Since magnanimity's high reach is rooted in the self-awareness of one's God-given dignity, it is not unfaithful to Aquinas's deeper theological commitments to extend the potential for magnanimity—in act, not merely in habit—further than his respect for the Philosopher seems to allow him to go.

However, universalizing the capacity for magnanimity risks sliding from liberality into profligacy. As the crown or ornament of the virtues, magnanimity can belong only to those who already possess a morally sound character. Only presumption aims at moral greatness before learning to walk in the virtuousness of a more temperate, workaday kind. Yet the Gospel message of human dignity does not allow us to write off from the start whole classes of people as incapable of magnanimous moral achievement. In the light of grace, there is hope for all.

Hoping for What? Cajetan on Magnanimity's Twofold Object

Now for the most important and challenging task in the unfolding of Aquinas's definition: to clarify the virtue's object. The primary defining feature of a virtue, in Aquinas's account, lies in its object, *obiectum*, that is, the target or immediate end to which the virtue is oriented.⁷⁵ Magnanimity is a reasonable stretch (mode) of *animus* (matter) to great things (object). It is, then, a hope for great things. For what great things, however? Different answers result in highly divergent portrayals of magnanimity.

In my attempt to resolve this question, Cajetan serves as my primary interlocutor. The great commentator draws attention to an apparent textual ambiguity about magnanimity's object:

In considering *ST* II-II, q. 129, a.1, a doubt arises: Whether magnanimity is about doing great works as its proper act and object, or

⁷³ *Super Eph* 4, lec.1: "Attendentes dignitatem ad quam vocati estis, ambuletis secundum quod ei convenit. Si enim quis vocatus esset ad nobile regnum, indignum esset quod faceret opera rusticana. Sic monet Ephesios apostolus, quasi dicat: vocati estis ut sitis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei, ut dictum est supra cap. II, 19."

⁷⁴ DeYoung, "Aquinas's Virtues," 14.

⁷⁵ On the object of a virtue, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 79–88.

whether it is about doing great works as a circumstance of rightly hoping for great honors.⁷⁶

As a *habitus*, a virtue is defined primarily by reference to the proper act and object to which it is oriented. Cajetan here proposes two candidates for the object: great works, or great honors for great works. In the first case, magnanimity primarily and directly intends the performance of great works; in the second, it primarily and directly hopes for great honors, albeit only in return for great works. Is magnanimity, then, primarily an orientation toward great works or to great honors? As Cajetan laconically observes, “the reason for the doubt is that diverse things are said of magnanimity.”⁷⁷

Hoping for Honor

The first two articles on magnanimity in *ST* may give the impression that magnanimity’s object lies in great honors. Honor is the greatest among exterior goods; since magnanimity concerns what is great simply and absolutely, magnanimity must therefore be about honors,⁷⁸ indeed great honors.⁷⁹ Moreover, magnanimity’s immediate matter lies in hope for great things; its object, then, lies in the great things that are the object of this hope. Aquinas explains, however: “Magnanimity is indeed immediately about the passion of hope, but mediately about honor, as the object of hope.”⁸⁰ Once again, magnanimity’s object seems to be honor, or more precisely, great honor.⁸¹ Finally, the proper act of a virtue lies in the due use of its matter; however, Aquinas explicitly says, “the proper matter of magnanimity is great honor”;⁸² therefore, magnanimity’s proper act is the due use of honor.⁸³ As Aquinas later summarizes, “magnanimity is about

⁷⁶ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, no. 1: “In articulo primo quaestionis centesimaevigesimaenonae dubium occurrit: An magnanimitas sit circa magna operari tanquam proprium actum et obiectum: an sit circa magna operari ut circumstantiam recte sperandi honores magnos.” (Leonine ed., 10:58a).

⁷⁷ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, no. 1: “Et est ratio dubii quia de magnanimitate diversa dicuntur” (Leonine ed., 10:58a).

⁷⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1.

⁷⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 2.

⁸⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, ad 2: “Magnanimitas est quidem immediate circa passionem spei, mediate autem circa honorem, sicut circa obiectum spei.”

⁸¹ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, resp.

⁸² *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 2, resp.: “Propria materia magnanimitatis est magnus honor.”

⁸³ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, resp.

honors, and uses them fittingly.”⁸⁴ Once again, fitting honor seems to be the object of magnanimity, and therefore that at which it aims.

The desire for honor, for Aquinas, should be rightly ordered. Admittedly, within Christian ascetical thought, hope or desire for honor is suspect and is often seen as stemming from ambition or vanity. As Aquinas puts it in an objection: “The virtuous are not praised for desiring honors, but more for spurning them.”⁸⁵ However, the objection is too sweeping in its blanket rejection. Honor’s limitation as a good is shown in the fact that it is a thing existing *extra animam*, outside the soul.⁸⁶ For Aquinas, nevertheless, it is a genuine good.⁸⁷ It is defined as “a certain reverence shown to someone in witness of his excellence.”⁸⁸ The root of its value is that it bears witness to virtue.⁸⁹ One may and should desire honor, then, albeit only in the right way.

What is it to desire honor in the right way? Reversing Aquinas’s description of the inordinate appetite for honor (ambition), one should desire honor only for a genuine excellence, and desire it for a due end.⁹⁰ For, as Cajetan observes, honor is a *bonum utile*, something not to be desired for itself, but only as useful for some further good.⁹¹ Honor is closely related to glory, in which someone’s good is not merely honored by one person, but known and approved by many.⁹² Aquinas’s description of the right desire for glory, then, applies closely also to honor:

It can be desired insofar as it is useful for something: either that God be glorified by humans; or that humans progress by the good they know in another; or that a human himself, from the goods that he knows in himself by the testimony of others’ praise, may strive to persevere and progress to greater things.⁹³

⁸⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, resp.

⁸⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, obj. 3: “Virtuosi non laudantur ex hoc quod cupiunt honores, sed magis ex hoc quod eos fugiunt.”

⁸⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 2, ad 2. See also *ST* I-II, q. 2, a. 2, sc.

⁸⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, obj. 1.

⁸⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, resp.: “Honor importat quandam reverentiam alicui exhibitam in testimonium excellentiae eius.”

⁸⁹ See *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, ad 2.

⁹⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, resp.

⁹¹ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 1, no. 4 (Leonine ed., 10:75).

⁹² *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1, resp.

⁹³ *ST* II-II, q. 132, a. 1, ad 3: “Potest tamen appeti in quantum est utile ad aliquid, vel ad hoc quod Deus ab hominibus glorificetur; vel ad hoc quod homines proficiant ex bono quod in alio cognoscunt; vel ex hoc quod ipse homo ex bonis quae in se cognoscit per testimonium laudis alienae studeat in eis perseverare et ad meliora proficere.”

There is, then, such a thing as right desire for proportionate honor: it is desired rightly when desired for progress in virtue (one's own or another's) or God's glory. Just as ambition, a vice opposed to magnanimity by excess, is disordered desire for honor,⁹⁴ magnanimity initially seems, on first reading, to be the *habitus* of right desire for honor, especially great honor.

Beyond the Minimum

Aquinas also characterizes magnanimity as the virtue that concerns not great honor and glory, but great works. The clearest example comes from Aquinas's early *Commentary on the Sentences*:

[The magnanimous one] tends to that which is great simply, that is, perfect acts of virtue; he does not, however, principally tend to that which is great in some respect, such as are exterior goods, among which great honor holds first place. For the magnanimous one does not seek honor as the end of his will, because he thinks this too cheap for him, since it is a vain and transitory good.⁹⁵

The argument is that honor, while not evil, is too slight a good (even a "vain" good) to be the primary object of pursuit for the great-spirited one. Given that, as Aquinas explains in *ST*, the magnanimous one is neither lifted up by great honors nor cast down by dishonors,⁹⁶ it would be odd to make great honors magnanimity's defining object. Only virtue is truly great in human life; honor is, by comparison, a small thing. Magnanimity aims primarily at the great in the former, not the latter.

According to this second strand of Aquinas's thinking on magnanimity, then, this virtue is directed to great moral enterprises. Its hopefulness expresses itself in the initiation and completion of great works. Note, however, that the "great works" at which magnanimity aims are great works of virtue. Thus, magnanimity's aim is for moral greatness. It is therefore subtly distinct from a sibling virtue of greatness that Aquinas calls "magnificence," *magnificentia*, the etymology of which suggests a

⁹⁴ See *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 2, resp.

⁹⁵ *In II sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 4: "[Magnanimus] tendit in id quod est magnum simpliciter, quod est scilicet actus virtutis perfectus; non autem tendit principaliter in id quod est magnum secundum quid, sicut sunt exteriora bona, inter quae praecipue magnum honor. Non enim magnanimus honorem quaerit tamquam finem voluntatis suae, quia hoc nimis sibi parvum reputat, cum sit vanum et transitorium bonum."

⁹⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 2, ad 3.

concern for making rather than for doing.⁹⁷ As the Carmelites of Salamanca explain:

Magnanimity intends of itself, in the first place, the great in the acts in which moral goodness is primarily located, namely, the intrinsic and immanent acts of the virtues. Magnificence, in contrast, primarily intends greatness in works produced exteriorly by art, for example, a great house, a beautiful temple, a splendid feast, and so on.⁹⁸

Magnanimity is the virtue of *moral* enterprise.

Since aimed at great acts of virtue, magnanimity is what we may describe as the supererogatory virtue. It is the habit of going beyond virtue's basic minimum, *ultra necessitatem virtutis*.⁹⁹ For, "the magnanimous one is not content to avoid wrong actions and do good actions as generally suffices, unless he does this more excellently."¹⁰⁰ This orientation to moral excellence explains the traditional accolade accorded to magnanimity: "Magnanimity is the crown of the virtues, since magnanimity inclines to doing great things in all the virtues, so that it does the great acts of fortitude, of temperance, and so on."¹⁰¹ Again, magnanimity is a virtue of moral hopefulness.

Cajetan notes that there is a problem with identifying magnanimity's object as the great in any virtue. The risk is that magnanimity collapses into the other moral virtues, as there seems no basis on which to distinguish their respective formal objects. As he formulates the objection:

Magnanimity coincides with any virtue, insofar as it produces its great act. Thus, it is not a specific virtue, but any virtue as exercising a great act. Magnanimity is therefore not one virtue, but the greatest fortitude, the greatest justice, the greatest temperance, and thus of the others.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 134, a. 2,

⁹⁸ Salmanticenses, *Arbor Praedicamentalis*, nos.102 and 474.

⁹⁹ *In III sent.*, d. 33, q. 3, a. 3, qa 4.

¹⁰⁰ *In III sent.*, d. 33, q. 3, a. 3, qa 4: "Magnanimus enim non est contentus vitare prava et facere bona secundum quod communiter sufficit, nisi excellentius faciat hoc."

¹⁰¹ *In II sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 4: "Magnanimitas est ornamentum virtutum omnium: quia magnanimitas inclinat ad faciendum magna in omnibus virtutibus, ut quod faciat maximos actus fortitudinis, temperantiae, et hujusmodi."

¹⁰² Cajetan, *Commentary on ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 4, no. 1: "Magnanimitas coincidit cum qualibet virtute inquantum facit suum actum magnum. Et sic non est virtus

Whether an act of fortitude, for example, is a great or a small act of fortitude, it is still an act of fortitude, not the act of some other virtue. Magnanimity, therefore, appears to lack any specific act of its own. Great-heartedness, so the objection goes, is no longer a single virtue, but many: it reduces to the collation of super-sized versions of the moral virtues.

Cajetan sees this problem of collapse as a “great difficulty.”¹⁰³ He is frankly not impressed with Aquinas’s own reply to this objection, which makes magnanimity a special virtue only because it concerns a special matter, namely, great honors.¹⁰⁴ If, as Cajetan contends, great honors are not the virtue’s intended target, then the problem of distinguishing magnanimity from the other virtues by a distinctive formal object remains.¹⁰⁵

In a rare moment of self-disclosure, Cajetan later confesses he came to a way of addressing the problem only with great effort, *cum tanto labore*.¹⁰⁶ The core of Cajetan’s solution, nevertheless, is remarkably simple:

Magnanimity has for its formal object and end *the great* in the work of any virtue. Temperance and the other virtues, in contrast, have for their formal objects the temperate, just, brave things, and so on, and only regard *the great* as a consequence.¹⁰⁷

While the motivating and intended object of magnanimous action is materially the same as that of greatly temperate, just, or brave action, it is formally distinct, since magnanimity intends great morally virtuous action under its own specific formal aspect, namely, as *great* virtuous action. The other moral virtues, even when exercised to an excellent degree, direct the intention primarily to that which is proper to each virtue. Temperance, for example, aims at the moderation of the greatest desires and pleasures of touch. Since the possession of a distinct motivating object is sufficient to distinguish and specify a virtue, this insight preserves magnanimity’s integrity as one virtue, distinct from the others.

Nevertheless, the magnanimous one performs temperate, brave, and

specialis, sed quaelibet virtus ut exercens magnum actum” (Leonine ed., 10:64).

¹⁰³ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 4, no. 1 (Leonine ed., 10:64a).

¹⁰⁴ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 4, obj. 1, resp. and ad 1.

¹⁰⁵ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 4, no. 1 (Leonine ed., 10:64a).

¹⁰⁶ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 134, a. 2, no. 3 (Leonine ed., 10:91b).

¹⁰⁷ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 4, no. 5: “Magnanimitas habet pro formali obiecto et fine magnum in cuiusque virtutis opere: temperantia vero et aliae virtutes habent pro formalibus obiectis ipsa temperata, iusta, fortia et huiusmodi; magna autem haec ipsa ex consequenti” (Leonine ed., 10:65b; italics added).

just acts. How can a great virtuous act simultaneously express diverse moral virtues—magnanimity and temperance or fortitude or justice—if these are really distinct habits? The Carmelites of Salamanca build on Cajetan's solution by proposing that magnanimity is a kind of general virtue, commanding¹⁰⁸ the acts of the other moral virtues:

Although magnanimity does not effect (at least not immediately and elicitively) the works of the other virtues, nor their greatness, nevertheless, when by hope and confidence it raises the appetite to these works as great, it helps and disposes to this: that these virtues, as it were obeying magnanimity, work great acts.¹⁰⁹

Magnanimity is like a military general who spurs on his soldiers, the moral virtues, to perform their respective roles in the battle superlatively well. A great brave act commanded by magnanimity but elicited by fortitude is formally magnanimous and materially brave. Thus, magnanimity is a distinct moral virtue with its specific motive and role, namely, to dispose to a great exercise of the other moral virtues.

Refusing the Dilemma

The core problem of ambivalence, however, remains: whether magnanimity's target or object is to be identified with great honors, or with great acts of virtue. Cajetan, in drawing attention to the problem, has perhaps unknowingly hit upon a fault line in Scholastic discussions of magnanimity before Aquinas. Gauthier, in his learned monograph on magnanimity, observes that Albert the Great, Aquinas's teacher, had vacillated on the question, initially following the Abelardian and Ciceronian interpretation that sees magnanimity primarily as a virtue of great moral enterprise, but later preferring an interpretation of Aristotle that regards it as the virtue concerning honor.¹¹⁰ Aristotle's text, however, is susceptible of either interpretation: while the Philosopher claims magnanimity is about honor, he also notes that the magnanimous man does the works of all the virtues:

¹⁰⁸ On the metaphor of commanding and obeying virtues, see Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 181–82.

¹⁰⁹ Salmanticenses, *Arbor Praedicamentalis*, nos. 97–98: “Licet [magnanimitas] haec non efficiat (saltem immediate et elictive) aliarum virtutum opera, neque eorum magnitudinem: dum tamen per spem et fiduciam erigit appetitum ad illa ut magna, juvat et disponit ad hoc ut ipsae virtutes quasi magnanimitati obsequentes, magna operentur.”

¹¹⁰ Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 305–9.

"Greatness in each virtue also seems proper to the magnanimous person."¹¹¹

Cajetan refuses the dilemma between honor-based and virtue-based accounts of magnanimity: "When it is said that the magnanimous one is 'worthy of great things,' this is understood of *both* great works *and* great honors."¹¹² He proposes this not merely as an interpretation of Aquinas, but as an account of magnanimity's defining object.¹¹³ Can such a synthetic approach to magnanimity's object succeed? While many praise Cajetan's response, few analyze it closely or notice that he offers not one, but two complementary solutions.

The Obliquity of Honor

Since a virtue's object is its primary defining feature, the greatest challenge in defining magnanimity is to clarify the duality of its object without threatening the virtue's unity. Cajetan repeats the view of the *Commentary on the Sentences* that, while there is a moderate or well-ordered desire for honor, this desire does not define the virtue of greatness. "For the magnanimous one," Cajetan argues, "would not truly be magnanimous if he did not tend directly to great things—that is, great not in the genus of least goods, like exterior goods, but truly great goods, namely, goods of the soul—since then he would not be tending into truly and simply great goods."¹¹⁴ Honor is *great* at best in the secondary sense that it is great among merely exterior goods; it is not great in comparison to virtue. To act in a way that is greatly just, brave, and merciful therefore defines the greatness of the magnanimous one far more than the great honors that she may receive as a consequence.

For this reason, Cajetan rules out a tempting solution to the problem of magnanimity's dual directedness. Aquinas writes, "the magnanimous one intends to do great works in any virtue, namely, insofar as he tends to those things that are worthy of great honor."¹¹⁵ This ambiguous statement

¹¹¹ Aristotle, *NE* 4.3.1123b.

¹¹² Cajetan, *Commentary on ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 4, no. 3: "Dum dicitur quo magnanimus est *magnis dignus*, intelligitur et de magnis operibus et de magnis honoribus" (Leonine ed., 10:58b; italics added).

¹¹³ Gauthier, similarly, interprets Aquinas as synthetic. Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 311–12.

¹¹⁴ Cajetan, *Commentary on ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 4, no. 2: "Nisi magnanimus tenderet directe in magna, quae sunt non in genere minimorum bonorum, qualia sunt exteriora bona, sed vere magna bona, quae sunt sola animi bona, non esset vere magnanimus, utpote non tendens in vere et simpliciter magna bona" (Leonine ed., 10:58b).

¹¹⁵ *ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 4, ad 1: "Magnanimus intendit magna operari in qualibet

is easily read as asserting that the magnanimous one does great acts for the sake of receiving honor. Thus interpreted, Aquinas would neatly unite great acts and great honors in a twofold object, as means and end. Yet, for Cajetan, this would be a serious moral error; indeed, it would get things upside down, putting honor before virtue. For, virtue is not for honor; honor is for virtue:

The proper end wherefore someone should be a seeker after great honor is that he did, does, preserves, and so on, a great work of virtue; for, the testimony of virtue is ordered to virtue and the virtuous as its end.¹¹⁶

The primary object of magnanimity, then, cannot lie in great honor.

Cajetan therefore grasps the nettle and asserts outright that Aquinas's statement, if taken formally, is false:

It is clear that magnanimity does not have honor for its object, and if it were to tend formally into great acts as worthy of great honor, already it would have great honor for its object, because it would tend to any such act under its rationale.¹¹⁷

Cajetan's reasoning is compelling. If magnanimity were directly to intend great virtuous acts under the description "worthy of great honor," then honor would become the end of great virtuous acts and ultimately definitive of magnanimous greatness, thereby inverting the proper relation between virtue (end) and honor (means). This ethically disastrous move would vitiate magnanimous virtuous agency by subordinating it to an inferior, external goal. Cajetan's clarity and boldness in ruling this solution out of court, however, leaves the great commentator with the challenge of saving Aquinas's text.

Cajetan interprets Aquinas's statement that magnanimity tends to what is worthy of great honor as false formally speaking. Yet he allows

virtute, inquantum scilicet tendit ad ea quae sunt digna magno honore."

¹¹⁶ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, no. 3: "Proprius autem finis quare aliquis est magno prosequendus honore, est quia magnum virtutis opus fecit, facit, custodit, etc.; testimonium enim virtutis ad virtutem et virtuosum ordinatur ut finem" (Leonine ed., 10:58b).

¹¹⁷ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, no. 3: "Patet quod magnanimitas non habet honorem pro obiecto: et si tenderet in magna formaliter inquantum sunt digna magno honore, iam haberet honorem magnum pro obiecto, quia sub eius ratione tenderet in quaecumque" (Leonine ed., 10:58b).

great honors into the object of magnanimity by the back door, so to speak:

Because it has for its formal object the great in any virtue, and the great in this sense is by its nature worthy of great honor, thence it is that magnanimity is about “great things” in both senses [i.e., both great acts of virtue and great honors], but principally insofar as “great things” are absolutely great.¹¹⁸

Magnanimity directly intends great acts of virtue as its end, and because such acts are worthy of great honor, the virtue tends as a consequence, *ex consequenti*, to the honor and glory due to such great acts. Since Cajetan normally prefers to use “object” for the formal object, he refrains from saying that great honor is any kind of object at all; he refers to it only as the “matter” of the virtue. However, the matter is the *materia circa quam*, the matter about which, which is the material object.¹¹⁹ Cajetan’s thought can legitimately be expressed, then, by saying that magnanimity’s formal and direct object is great acts of virtue, and the material, oblique object is the great honor due to great acts of virtue. The magnanimous one directly intends great works of virtue, not honor; but by intending great virtuous acts, she thereby, obliquely, tends to the honor and glory that is their due.

The Use of Honor

Cajetan’s obliquity solution succeeds in keeping honor out of the direct intention of the magnanimous one; it does not, however, resolve all problems of interpretation. Aquinas’s fullest portrayal of the twofold object of magnanimity runs as follows:

Magnanimity is directed toward two [objects]: to one [object] as its intended end, which is some great work, which the magnanimous one focuses on according to his capacity. . . . Magnanimity is directed toward the second [object] as the matter it uses rightly, namely, toward honor.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Cajetan, *Commentary* on *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 1, no. 3: “Quoniam habet magnum in cuisvis virtutis opere pro formali obiecto, et magnum est suapte natura dignum magno honore: ideo magnanimitas est circa magna utroque modo, sed principaliter prout sunt absolute magna” (Leonine ed., 10:58b).

¹¹⁹ Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 111–12.

¹²⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 131, a. 2, ad 1: “Magnanimitas ad duo respicit. Ad unum quidem sicut ad finem intentum, quod est aliquod magnum opus, quod magnanimus attentat secundum suam facultatem. . . . Ad aliud autem respicit magnanimitas sicut ad materiam qua debite utitur, scilicet ad honorem.” See also *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 8, resp.

Here magnanimity's twofold object is divided into the intended end, namely, a great work, and the matter, namely, honor. Honor, however, is described not merely as the indirectly intended object, but as the matter that magnanimity "uses rightly." Thus, while magnanimity is not trained on honor as an end, for Aquinas, it does choose this useful good, *bonum utile*, as means to an honorable good, namely, great acts of virtue. Magnanimity does therefore target honor, not merely obliquely, but directly, albeit only as a means.

Cajetan therefore offers a second solution, not normally noted, to the problem of magnanimity's twofold object. He clarifies Aquinas's distinction between magnanimity's matter (great honor) and its formal object or immediate end (great acts of virtue) by drawing an illuminating analogy between magnanimity and fortitude, which evidences a similar duality of object:

Fortitude relates in one way to the matter it modifies, for example, fear of death, and in another way to its proper act. For, the proper act is the proper end of fortitude, but the matter is moderated because of the end (since the brave person fears and dares moderately *in order to* attack and stand firm bravely, and not conversely). Similarly, it happens thus in a parallel way in magnanimity. Its proper act is to do great things, just as the proper act of the brave person is to act bravely. But because this act is impeded and encouraged by hope of great things such as honor and glory, so it is necessary to moderate the hope of honor. . . . Therefore, magnanimity moderates the appetite for great honor *in order to* do great things in any virtue.¹²¹

The magnanimous one, then, does desire great honor, although she desires this in the right way, as a means. The right appetite for honor integral to magnanimity is the choice of honor as a means to its end and primary work of doing greatly virtuous acts.

Cajetan therefore offers not one but two solutions to the place of honor

¹²¹ Cajetan, *Commentary on ST II-II*, q. 129, a. 1, no. 2: "Sicut fortitudo aliter se habet ad materiam quam modificat, puta timorem mortis, et aliter ad proprium actum; quia proprius actus est fortitudinis (moderate siquidem timet et audet fortis ut fortiter aggrediatur et sustineat, et non e converso): ita proportionaliter contingit in magnanimitate. Actus siquidem proprius eius est operari magna: sicut fortis proprius actus est fortiter agere. Sed quoniam hic actus ex spe magnorum, puta honoris et gloriae, impeditur et promovetur, ideo oportet moderari spem honoris. . . . Idcirco magnanimitas moderatur appetitum honoris magni, ut magna in qualibet virtute operetur" (Leonine ed., 10:58a).

within magnanimity. Magnanimity is first and foremost directed to great works of virtue. However, magnanimity is also oriented toward great honor both *obliquely* because of its primary directedness to acts that are greatly virtuous (and are therefore greatly honorable), and *directly* as a means to great virtuous action.

Building on Cajetan's Solution

There is a serious difficulty with this second solution. The challenge is to explain how honor may serve as a means for virtuous acts. As already seen, for Cajetan, virtue is not for honor, but honor for virtue. Here he accords with Aquinas, for whom those who do good deeds only for honor are not virtuous.¹²² Indeed: "If [the virtuous] were to work for honor, it would no longer be virtue, but rather ambition."¹²³ The mechanism by which honor motivates virtue is therefore unclear. The dilemma is this: either honor is the intended end of virtuous acts, in which case it subverts virtuous motivation by ambition, or it is not, in which case it apparently cannot motivate virtuous acts. How, then, can honor serve as a means to virtuous acts?

Cajetan's core position can be defended, I argue, by means of a causal distinction: honor does foster the magnanimous one's aspiration to great acts, but only as an efficient and quasi-formal, rather than final, cause. That is, honor motivates the magnanimous one not by providing the goal to be attained by great acts of virtue, which are their own end, but by bringing about the self-image that causes and measures a great *animus*. This proposal combines two insights: first, that self-image plays a crucial role in forming magnanimous motivation, and second, that honor fosters the right kind of self-knowledge.

First, then, self-image exercises a role integral to magnanimity's work. Aquinas derives from Aristotle the thesis that the magnanimous one "thinks himself worthy of great things."¹²⁴ Aquinas interprets—or creatively reinterprets—Aristotle as follows:

Magnanimity makes a human think himself worthy of great things by considering the gifts he possesses from God, just as, if he has great power of *animus*, magnanimity makes him tend to the perfect works of virtue.¹²⁵

¹²² ST II-II, q. 131, a. 11, ad 3; see also q. 132, a. 1, ad 2.

¹²³ ST I-II, q. 2, a. 2, resp.: "Si a uem propter honorem operarentur, iam non esset virtus, sed magis ambitio."

¹²⁴ Aristotle, NE 4.3.1123b.

¹²⁵ ST II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad 4: "Magnanimitas igitur facit quod homo se magnis

There are two qualifications of Aristotle here. First, one's own worthiness for great things is derived from the gifts of God. To acknowledge one's gifts may seem contrary to humility, but Aquinas elsewhere defends the idea that there can be a "good pride," *bona superbia*, deriving from the abundant goods bestowed by God.¹²⁶ Moreover: "That someone thinks and approves his own good is not a sin, for it is said, 'we have not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may know the gifts given to us by God' (1 Cor 2:12)."¹²⁷ While Aristotle's magnanimous man finds satisfaction in his own virtuous achievement, Aquinas's recognizes his own goodness as a gift of God. Secondly, great worthiness for Aquinas is not in the first place being deserving of great honor, as for Aristotle, but being fit to exercise great works of virtue. Knowing oneself worthy of great things is not a cause for self-satisfaction, therefore, but an occasion for getting started and persevering in moral agency.

The characterization of the magnanimous one in terms of his self-image as worthy of great things is often repeated in the literature as though it defines the virtue. However, magnanimity cannot be defined as the virtue of knowing oneself worthy of great things, since magnanimity is an appetitive, not an intellectual virtue. Yet self-knowledge does play a vital role in the virtue for this very reason, as the right measure for appetite. The role of self-image in humility, another appetitive virtue, one closely related to magnanimity, provides a helpful comparison:

It properly belongs to humility that someone restrain himself, lest he be borne toward what is above him. However, for this, someone must know the extent to which he falls short of what exceeds his own power. Therefore, cognition of one's own defect, as a certain rule directive of the appetite, belongs to humility.¹²⁸

dignificet secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo, sicut, si habet magnam virtutem animi, magnanimitas facit quod ad perfecta opera virtutis tendat."

¹²⁶ ST II-II, q. 162, a. 1, ad 1.

¹²⁷ ST II-II, q. 132, a. 1: "Quod autem aliquis bonum suum cognoscat et approbet, non est peccatum, dicitur enim I ad Cor. II, nos autem non spiritum huius mundi accepimus, sed spiritum qui ex Deo est, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis."

¹²⁸ ST II-II, q. 161, a. 2, resp.: "Ad humilitatem proprie pertinet 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 proportionem eius quod suam virtutem excedit. Et ideo cognitio proprii defectus pertinet ad humilitatem sicut regula quaedam directiva appetitus."

That is, since humility restrains the force or impetuosity (*impetus*) of the *animus* from tending to great things in an inordinate way, it is a moral virtue, one situated essentially in the appetite. Nevertheless, the intellect plays its role as directive rule in this virtue, by rationally restraining the stretch of the *animus* in the light of a person's limitations.¹²⁹ By parity of reasoning, the knowledge of one's worth, while not magnanimity's essence, is nevertheless a directive rule of the magnanimous one's stretch of *animus*. To underestimate one's own dignity or capacity is to fall into pusillanimity: the small-hearted one, lacking consciousness of her worthiness, shrinks from the great things to which she is suited.¹³⁰ Her ignorance of her own condition is the cause of the smallness of her *animus*.¹³¹ Accurate self-awareness is the tuning fork by which the *animus* is neither presumptuously overstretched nor pusillanimously understretched, but magnanimously tuned to proportionately great things.

If magnanimity depends on an accurate self-image of one's potential and gifts, it is also true that honor cultivates this self-knowledge. For Aquinas, we grow in knowledge of our own virtue not so much by an act of introspection, but by seeing our goodness reflected in another's eyes when we are honored. Thus Aquinas says: "From the goods that a human knows in himself by the witness of another's praise, he may be eager in those good things and progress to better."¹³² Honor is thus literally an "affirmation," a making firm, of a person's virtue: it is ordered toward virtue becoming strong in its bearer. As such, honor may be desired as a means to virtue without it becoming the end for which virtue is desired.

Cajetan's solution therefore stands. Honor is not the final cause of magnanimous virtuous acts, but an efficient and quasi-formal cause, as it helps cultivate the self-image—the self-knowledge of one's goodness—that is the cognitive cause and directive rule of a great *animus*.

Cajetan's elucidation of the twofold directedness of magnanimity, understood in this way, is attractive because it shows that magnanimity's

¹²⁹ ST II-II, q. 161, a. 6, resp.: "Humility lies essentially in the appetite, insofar as someone restrains the impetuosity of his *animus* from tending inordinately to great things; however, it has its rule in cognition, namely, that someone should not judge himself to be above that which he is [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]."

¹³⁰ ST II-II, q. 133, a. 2, resp.

¹³¹ ST II-II, q. 133, a. 2, resp. and ad 1.

¹³² ST II-II, q. 132, a. 1, ad 3: "Homo ex bonis quae in se cognoscit per testimonium laudis alienae studeat in eis perseverare et ad meliora proficere."

bivalent orientation to great virtuous acts and great honor need be seen neither as a threat to the unity of a single *habitus* nor as a morally dubious elevation of great honor as a moral motive. Honor is never to be desired directly as an end in itself; rather, it is relegated to an appropriately subordinate place within magnanimity, as oblique object and direct means, without its crucial importance for the life of magnanimous virtue being erased. With the secondary place of honor clarified, the core of magnanimity shines out more clearly as an *animus* for great works of virtue: a moral hope.

Kindred Virtues

I have thus far postponed consideration of what contribution the theological perspective makes to Aquinas's account of magnanimity. In his account of this virtue, is Aquinas addressing the nature of "infused" or "acquired" magnanimity, or both? The relationship between the moral virtues begotten in the soul by the gift of grace and their acquired counterparts generated by habituation is a matter of significant interest in the contemporary literature, perhaps because it is thought that we find the core of Aquinas's distinctively theological virtue theory in his account of the infused moral virtues. The interpretation that, in the Christian, there cannot be acquired, only infused moral virtue, has recently been gaining ground.¹³³ I have argued, on the contrary, that a careful causal analysis of infused and acquired moral virtues shows that, on Aquinas's view, they can coexist in the baptized person.¹³⁴ A more fruitful line of theological enquiry, I suggest, is not to explore what Aquinas says about infused

¹³³ For a trio of recent articles defending this viewpoint, see: William C. Mattison III, "Aquinas, Custom, and the Coexistence of Infused and Acquired Cardinal Virtues," *Journal of Moral Theology* 8, no. 2 (2019): 1–24; Angela Knobel, "Elevated Virtue? A Reply to Bowlin and Aquinas," *Journal of Moral Theology* 8, no. 2 (2019): 25–39; Jean Porter, "Moral Virtues, Charity, and Grace: Why the Infused and Acquired Virtues Cannot Co-Exist," *Journal of Moral Theology* 8, no. 2 (2019): 40–66.

¹³⁴ Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 180–85. All three authors in the previous note argue for the incompatibility of acquired and infused moral virtue on the basis of a different finality. Yet Aquinas thinks that political prudence (ordered towards the common good of the kingdom) commands domestic and monastic prudence (ordered to the good of the household and the individual, respectively), despite an analogous difference in intrinsic finality (*ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 11, ad 3). My interpretation is that, for Aquinas, acquired moral virtues acquire a new extrinsic finality to supernatural beatitude under the command of infused moral virtue, just as monastic prudence acquires a new finality to the common good under the command of political prudence.

versus acquired magnanimity, which is very little, if anything, but rather to identify the way his theological perspective, at a very deep level, shapes his account of this virtue.

The interpretive key is the connectivity of the moral virtues.¹³⁵ When justice loses fellowship with mercy, for example, it becomes unforgiving hardness; when fortitude ignores prudence, foolhardiness results. Moral virtues are truly themselves only when in communion with the others. The connectivity of the moral virtues applies also to their respective concepts. We best understand a virtue like magnanimity not in isolation, but in company with other virtues. Mary M. Keys is right, therefore, to resist those who see Aquinas's magnanimity as substantially the same as Aristotle's, albeit with some Christian virtues added on. She insists, "a magnanimity that is fully at home in the world of humility and gratitude must be a *transformed* magnanimity in some crucial respects."¹³⁶ The idea of magnanimity does not remain unchanged when transplanted from Aristotelian ethics into the theological ecology of Christian virtues.

While Keys examines the influence of humility, gratitude, and charity on Aquinas's understanding of magnanimity, I believe the most important virtue is omitted. Magnanimity's primary and immediate matter is the passionate and committed hope for the attainment of some great work of virtue. Although Aquinas unites great-spiritedness and the virtues of humility, gratitude, and charity, I argue that magnanimity's inner causal structure, in Aquinas's thought, imitates more closely that of the theological virtue of hope. If humility is magnanimity's spouse, hope is its twin sister.

Several authors have connected magnanimity and theological hope. Gauthier, while drawing contrasts between them, does not neglect to acknowledge their "kinship."¹³⁷ Josef Pieper understands magnanimity as a "natural hope" contrasted with the "supernatural hope" of the theological virtue.¹³⁸ More recently, like Pieper, Pinches sees magnanimity as a natural hope that has been vivified by theological hope.¹³⁹ For him, these two virtues "intertwine" as part of a "nexus" of "finely laced" virtues.¹⁴⁰ A

¹³⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 65, a. 1.

¹³⁶ Keys, "Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity," 58.

¹³⁷ Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 344.

¹³⁸ Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 189–92; Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 101–3, 108–11, 118–19, 122, 127.

¹³⁹ Pinches, "On Hope," 357.

¹⁴⁰ Pinches, "On Hope," 356.

sign of their close connection is that they both are opposed to a vice named “presumption.”¹⁴¹

These suggestive remarks fall short of an accurate exploration of the relation of hope and magnanimity. The parallelism Pieper and Pinches allegedly find between “natural” magnanimity and “supernatural” hope is awkward, as there is no reason why magnanimity, like the other moral virtues, cannot be infused. Moreover, Pinches glosses over the fact that, for Aquinas, the presumption opposed to theological hope differs in species from that contrary to magnanimity.¹⁴² A closer scrutiny of the analogy and disanalogy between these kindred virtues is needed. The textual evidence, it turns out, is conflicting.

Convergence or Divergence?

Every hope has a twofold object: the good or end for which someone hopes (final cause), and the means by which someone hopes to attain this good (efficient cause). We hope *for* some good while hoping *in* some person, whether ourselves or another. David Elliot explains in his recent monograph that the theological virtue of hope is similarly defined by its twofold object: God as the source of eternal beatitude (final cause), and God as aiding the attainment of this good (efficient cause).¹⁴³ As Aquinas says, “the hope of attaining eternal life has two objects, namely, eternal life itself (*what* someone hopes) and divine help (*that by which* someone hopes).”¹⁴⁴ In Pieper’s gloss on Cajetan, the one hoping hopes for God from God, *sperans sperat Deum a Deo*.¹⁴⁵ The dual object of theological hope provides a helpful point of comparison with magnanimity.

Texts from the discussion of the virtue of hope in *ST* (II-II, q. 17)

¹⁴¹ Pinches refers to “this same vice (with a different object)” (“On Hope,” 356).

¹⁴² *ST* II-II, q. 1, a. 1, resp. *Pace* Pinches, a difference of object implies diversity of vices.

¹⁴³ David Elliot, *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 63–65.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De virtutibus*, q. 4, a. 1, resp.: “Et ideo spes adipiscendi vitam aeternam habet duo obiecta, scilicet ipsam vitam aeternam, quam quis sperat, et auxilium divinum, a quo sperat” (italics added in English).

¹⁴⁵ Josef Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 103. While not an exact quotation of Cajetan, Pieper’s gloss is a faithful reflection; see Cajetan, *Commentary on ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 5, no. 27 (Leonine ed., 8:130a): “Just as the one hoping hopes immediately by God, so he hopes for God immediately as the end, such that *that by which* he hopes and *what* he hopes for are the same [Quemadmodum igitur sperans a Deo immediate sperat, ita Deum sibi immediate sperat ut finem, ut sic aequa sint *a quo et quod* speratur]” (italics added). For Cajetan, then, God is both *what* one hopes for and *that by which* one hopes.

suggest that, while magnanimity and theological hope are both forms of virtuous hope, they differ in regard to both that for which they hope and the one in whom they hope:

Magnanimity tends to the arduous, hoping for something that is of one's own power. Whence it properly regards the operation of certain great things. But hope, as it is a theological virtue, regards the arduous to be attained by another's help.¹⁴⁶

The final causes of the two virtues diverge, then, since magnanimity aims at a goal attainable by one's own power, whereas theological hope's goal—God as the source of eternal beatitude—is attained only by God's help, *auxilium*. Moreover, the efficient causes are distinct. Magnanimous hope trusts in the agent's own power, whereas theological hope leans (*innitur*) on the divine help.¹⁴⁷ The same contrast recurs in discussion of the vice of presumption: magnanimity involves confidence derived from the agent's own power (*de propria virtute*), whereas theological hope clings to the divine power (*inhaeret divinae potentia*).¹⁴⁸ By theological hope, someone trusts in God; by magnanimity, she trusts in herself.¹⁴⁹ Here, the twofold disparity of object for magnanimous and theological hope could not appear more stark.

However, when we reach the question on magnanimity (q. 129), Aquinas subverts the apparent contrast between magnanimity's self-trust and theological hope's trust in God. While considering whether confidence belongs to magnanimity, Aquinas raises an Aristotelian objection: one may have confidence not only in oneself but also in another, such as God, whereas magnanimity needs the help of no one.¹⁵⁰ Aquinas's reply tries to save Aristotle's text, but stretches it to breaking point:

As the Philosopher says, it belongs to the magnanimous one "to need nothing," for need belongs to a deficient one. However, this [needing nothing] must be understood in a human way, hence he adds, "or scarcely anything." For, it is above a human being to

¹⁴⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 5, ad 4: "Magnanimitas tendit in arduum sperans aliquid quod est suae potestatis. Unde proprie respicit operationem aliquorum magnorum. Sed spes, secundum quod est virtus theologica, respicit arduum alterius auxilio assequendum, ut dictum est."

¹⁴⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 1.

¹⁴⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 21, a. 1, resp.

¹⁴⁹ See Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 339.

¹⁵⁰ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, obj. 1.

need nothing entirely. For every human being needs, in the very first place, divine help, but secondarily even human help, because a human being is a naturally social animal, since he does not suffice of himself for life. Therefore, insofar as he requires others, thus it belongs to the magnanimous one to have confidence deriving from others, because this also belongs to the excellence of a human being, that he has others at hand who can help him.¹⁵¹

Employing a theological anthropology of grace, as well as the Philosopher's understanding of the human as naturally social, Aquinas exploits Aristotle's concession that the magnanimous one needs nothing "or scarcely anything." While Aquinas's magnanimous person is not a needy kind of fellow, he does place confidence in others and God, on whom he rightly depends.

In his midrash on Aristotle's text, the influence of the perspective of theological hope on Aquinas's conception of magnanimity emerges strongly. The viewpoint of theological hope is one of confident dependence on friendship, especially the friendship possible with God through charity: "With the advent of charity, hope is rendered more perfect, since we hope especially in our friends."¹⁵² A magnanimity increasingly modeled on theological hope transforms Aristotle's self-sufficient magnanimous one into a cooperative agent who pursues a difficult and great good through the help of others.

The note of magnanimity's trust in God's help sounds again in Aquinas's discussion of the vice of pusillanimity (q. 133). Aquinas refers to Moses and Jeremiah, who, when called by God to their respective prophetic offices, nevertheless humbly declined:

¹⁵¹ *ST* II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad 1: "Sicut philosophus dicit, in *Ethic.* IV, ad magnanimum pertinet nullo indigere, quia hoc deficientis est, hoc tamen debet intelligi secundum modum humanum; unde addit, vel vix. 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. Inquantum ergo indiget aliis, sic ad magnanimum pertinet ut habeat fiduciam de aliis, quia hoc etiam ad excellentiam hominis pertinet, quod habeat alios in promptu qui eum possint iuvare. Inquantum autem ipse aliquid potest, intantum ad magnanimitatem pertinet fiducia quam habet de seipso."

¹⁵² *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 8, resp.: "Adveniente caritate, spes perfectior redditur, quia de amicis maxime speramus."

By divine grace, Moses and Jeremiah were fit for the office to which they were divinely elected. Considering the insufficiency arising from their own infirmity, they declined, but not obstinately, lest they lapse into pride.¹⁵³

Christian magnanimity is implicit here as the vocational virtue opposed to the prideful refusal of God's call. The altitude to which God calls a person gives rise to a vertiginous queasiness.¹⁵⁴ The humble awareness of one's own limitations may therefore slide into stubborn resistance to vocation that paradoxically blends pusillanimity with pride.¹⁵⁵ The corrective to such small-heartedness is a magnanimous confidence in God: Moses and Jeremiah were fit for their high office "by divine grace." Thus, what risked being prideful and pusillanimous refusal of the call gives way to a magnanimous acceptance of office by trust in God's help.

Importantly, this virtuous dependence on God and others does not undermine the magnanimous one's agency. Aquinas advocates a concurrentist theology of divine-human cooperation.¹⁵⁶ Grace and freewill do not compete in a zero-sum game. Doing something by God's help and doing it oneself are not mutually exclusive options: one acts well precisely through God's help. Aquinas explains, in his discussion of the vice of presumption (q. 130):

As the Philosopher says in [*Nicomachean*] *Ethics* III, "what we can do through others, we can in some way do by ourselves." Therefore, because we can think and do good with divine help, this does not totally exceed our own capacity. Thus, it is not presumptuous if someone intends to do some virtuous work. It would be presumptuous if someone were to aim at this without confidence in divine help.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ *ST* II-II, q. 133, a. 1, ad 4: "Moyses et Ieremias digni erant officio ad quod divinitus eligebantur, ex divina gratia. Sed ipsi considerantes propriae infirmitatis insufficientiam, recusabant, non tamen pertinaciter, ne in superbiam laberentur."

¹⁵⁴ Pieper refers to *acedia* as "a lack of magnanimity": "It lacks courage for the great things that are proper to the nature of the Christian. It is a kind of anxious vertigo that befalls the human individual when he becomes aware of the height to which God has raised him" (*Faith, Hope, Love*, 119).

¹⁵⁵ *ST* II-II, q. 133, a. 1, ad 3.

¹⁵⁶ *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5, ad 1.

¹⁵⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 130, a. 1, ad 3: "Sicut philosophus dicit, in III *Ethic.*, quae per alios possumus, aliquantulum per nos possumus. Et ideo, quia cogitare et facere bonum possumus cum auxilio divino, non totaliter hoc excedit facultatem nostram. Et

This is decisive evidence that, despite some earlier texts to the contrary, Aquinas does not attribute pure self-reliance to the great-hearted. Presumption is a vice opposed to magnanimity. Since it would be presumptuous to aim to do a virtuous work without confidence in divine help, the magnanimous one, who aims at great virtuous works, must place confidence in God as well as self.

Aquinas's earlier *Commentary on the Sentences* supports the interpretation that the perspective of theological hope fashions magnanimity anew, making confidence in God's help integral to the virtue. Aquinas considers whether hope is the same as magnanimity.¹⁵⁸ The reply distinguishes, but only to unite:

Magnanimity more closely approaches to hope than the virtues mentioned [namely, longanimity and patience]: for, it exists when there is a stretching of the appetite to some arduous good to be attained, and so concerns hope the passion. . . . Nevertheless, magnanimity is not the same as hope the virtue: for, it concerns the arduous that lies in the human affairs, not the arduous that is God. Hence, it is a moral, not a theological virtue, although it is a participant in hope.¹⁵⁹

While Aquinas closely relates magnanimity and theological hope, he distinguishes them on the basis of their final cause. Magnanimity is an active hope for attaining an arduous good within the bounds of earthly or human concerns (*res humana*) rather than being a hope for God as the highest good and beatitude. Yet the resemblance between magnanimity and hope in this passage goes further than the mere similarity between the passion of hope and theological hope: magnanimity is a participant in theological hope (*participans aliquid a spe*).

Magnanimity participates in theological hope because it hopes in

ideo non est praesumptuosum si aliquis ad aliquod opus virtuosum faciendum intendat. Esset autem praesumptuosum si ad hoc aliquis tenderet absque fiducia divini auxilii."

¹⁵⁸ *In II sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, obj. 4.

¹⁵⁹ *In III sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4: "Magnanimitas magis accedit ad spem quam aliqua dictarum virtutum: quia est secundum extensionem appetitus in aliquod bonum arduum obtinendum; et ideo circa spem passionem versatur, et ejus opposita. . . . Sed tamen magnanimitas non est idem quod spes virtus: quia est circa arduum quod consistit in rebus humanis, non circa arduum quod est Deus; unde non est virtus theologica, sed moralis, participans aliquid a spe."

divine help to attain its arduous and great good.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, magnanimity aims at something great “by considering the divine help, or the divine gift, whether gratuitous or natural.”¹⁶¹ This is a theologizing of magnanimity: magnanimity sets its aim high because, like theological hope, it relies on help from God. While the final causes of hope and magnanimity differ, they share the same efficient cause.

The Carmelites of Salamanca express this theocentric magnanimity well:

Magnanimity takes its motive and rule of operating from *what is of God in us*: for the magnanimous one, seeing in himself great gifts of God, or at least great helps promised to him, derives thence the motive and rule of doing great things, not succumbing to their arduousness, as he knows they do not exceed the said gifts or helps. When he does great things, he thinks himself fit for great honor not because of himself, but because of what he receives from God.¹⁶²

Far from being a virtue of pride-filled self-sufficiency, magnanimity is a cooperative virtue. The tuning fork for her *animus* is her self-image as someone gifted and helped by God. Magnanimity hopes to do a great work by confidence in the self's bestowed goodness, the friendship of others, and in the first place, the help of God. Aquinas's magnanimity imitates its big sister, theological hope.

A Definition of Magnanimity

It is finally possible to offer something approaching a formal definition of magnanimity, based upon the Cajetan-influenced reading of Aquinas presented above. The definition of magnanimity identifies its different “causal” elements: (1) personal subject, (2) mode, (3), subjective matter, (4) objective matter, (5) object, (6) efficient cause, and (7) exemplar.

¹⁶⁰ Aquinas has just explained that patience and longanimity both participate in hope, since patience hopes for divine help in dangers and longanimity hopes for divine help when laboring in some difficult enterprise (*In III sent.*, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 3).

¹⁶¹ *In III sent.*, d. 33, q. 2, a. 1, ac. 4, ad 3: “... ex consideratione divini auxilii, vel divini doni, vel gratuiti vel naturalis.”

¹⁶² Salmanticenses, *Arbor Praedicamentalis*, no. 141: “Magnanimitas sumit motivum et regulam operandi ab eo, quod est Dei in nobis: videns enim in se magnanimus magna Dei dona, aut saltem magna auxilia sibi promissa, sumit inde motivum et regulam operandi magna, eorum arduitatatis non succumbens, quia scit non superexcedere praedicta dona vel auxilia: dumque magna agit, reputat se, non propter se, sed propter illa quae ex Deo accepit, magno honore” (italics added in English).

Magnanimity is a *habitus* of (1) a morally virtuous person that (2) drives and stretches, in proportion to the goodness and capacity of the agent, (3) the *animus* in exercising (4) a passionate and committed hope (5a) toward great works of virtue (and thereby obliquely to great honor and glory), and (5b) directly to great honor and glory as testimony and therefore means to great virtue, a hope that is (6) strengthened by awareness of and confidence in the gifts of soul and helps given by God, (7) and exemplified in those who rise to God's call. All this is an elaboration of Aquinas's marvelously compressed definition, *quaedam extensio animi ad magna*.

I have never been convinced by the oft-repeated claim that, for Aquinas, there can be no natural or moral virtue of hope.¹⁶³ If theological hope aims at eternal beatitude with God, why could there not be an earthly virtue of hope that aims at more proximate goods? The arguments against this view are not convincing.¹⁶⁴ While "hope" often refers to a passion, there is no reason why it could not also refer to the *habitus* that disposes to the right ordering of this passion and the actions flowing therefrom. Moreover, while there is always uncertainty in the attainment of a hoped-for outcome, such a virtue's formal object need not share in this contingency if the virtue's immediate target is morally virtuous agency. (The medic risking her life in war-torn Syria is no less brave or magnanimous for failing, due to circumstances beyond her control, to save an injured child's life.) Finally, while hope in general is too broad to serve as the specific domain or matter of a moral virtue, the specific hope to perform great virtuous actions is not, as Cajetan shows. While Aquinas does not use the term "hope" to name a moral virtue, the argument of this paper has been that he certainly does advocate a moral virtue of hope, namely, magnanimity, which is, at core, nothing other than a spirited drive toward ethically excellent agency: a moral hope.

N.V

¹⁶³ Christopher A. Bobier, "Why Hope Is Not a Moral Virtue: Aquinas's Insight," *Ratio* 31, no. 2 (2018): 214–32; Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love*, 99–101; Pinches, "On Hope," 349; Mary Michael Glenn, "A Comparison of the Thomistic and Scotistic Concepts of Hope," *The Thomist* 20, no. 1 (1957): 32.

¹⁶⁴ For a sensible acknowledgement of the possibility of a Thomistic natural virtue of hope, see Aaron D. Cobb and Adam Green, "The Theological Virtue of Hope as a Social Virtue," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 5, no. 1 (2017): 231n4.