

QUESTION 102

Respectfulness

Next we have to consider respectfulness (*observantia*) and its parts (questions 102-105). The vices opposed to it will be clear from these.

As regards respectfulness, there are three questions: (1) Is respectfulness a specific virtue distinct from other virtues? (2) What does respectfulness supply? (3) How does respectfulness compare with piety?

Article 1

Is respectfulness a specific virtue distinct from other virtues?

It seems that respectfulness is not a specific virtue distinct from other virtues (*observantia non sit specialis virtus ab aliis distincta*):

Objection 1: Virtues are distinguished by their objects. But the object of respectfulness is not distinct from the object of piety. For in his *Rhetorica* Tully says, “Respectfulness is that through which men of high office are deemed worthy of a certain veneration and honor” (*per quam homines aliqua dignitate antecedentes quodam cultu et honore dignantur*). But piety likewise bestows veneration and honor on parents, who are eminently worthy of it. Therefore, respectfulness is not a virtue distinct from piety.

Objection 2: Just as honor and veneration are owed to men placed in high office (*hominibus in dignitate constitutis*), so, too, they are owed to those who excel in knowledge and virtue. But there is no specific virtue by which we give honor and veneration to men who have attained superiority in knowledge and virtue (*qui scientiae vel virtutis excellentiam habent*). Therefore, it is likewise the case that respectfulness, by which we give veneration and honor to those who excel us in office (*qui nos in dignitate antecedunt*), is not a special virtue distinct from other virtues.

Objection 3: Men of high office are owed many things that the law compels us to bestow—this according to Romans 13:7 (“Render to everyone what is due: tribute to those to whom tribute is due, etc.”). But those things to which we are compelled by law pertain to legal justice, or even to specific justice. Therefore, respectfulness is not in its own right a specific virtue distinct from other virtues (*non est per se specialis virtus ab aliis distincta*).

But contrary to this: In his division of the parts of justice, Tully includes respectfulness along with justice’s other parts, which are specific virtues.

I respond: As is clear from what has been said (q. 101, a. 1), the virtues have to be distinguished by a certain ordered descent, as does the excellence or superiority (*excellentia*) of the persons to whom something is to be rendered.

Now just as one’s father of the flesh participates in a particularized way in the property *father*, which is found in a universal way in God, so a person who exercises providence over us in some regard likewise participates in a particularized way in the property *father*, since a father is a principle of governing, training, teaching, and of all the things that pertain to the perfection of human life.

Now a person is placed in high office (*persona in dignitate constituta est*) as a principle of governing in certain matters, e.g., the ruler of a political community (*princeps civitatis*) in civil affairs, a general of an army (*dux exercitus*) in matters of war, a head master (*magister*) in teaching, and so on for other similar cases. And so it is that all such persons are called fathers because of a similar sort of care—in the way that in 4 Kings 5:13 Naaman’s servants said to him, “Father, if the prophet had told you to do some extraordinary deed, etc.”

And so just as under *religion*, through which veneration (*cultus*) is given to God, we find, according to a certain ordering, *piety*, through which our parents are venerated (*coluntur parentes*), so under *piety* we find *respectfulness*, through which veneration and honor (*cultus et honor*) are shown to persons who

are placed in high office.

Reply to objection 1: Just as, in accord with what was explained above (q. 101, a. 3), religion is called piety through a sort of supereminence and yet piety is strictly speaking distinct from religion, so, too, piety is called respectfulness through a certain sort of excellence or superiority and yet respectfulness is properly speaking distinct from piety.

Reply to objection 2: From the fact that someone is placed in a high office, he has not only a certain superiority of status (*non solum quandam status excellentiam habet*), but also a certain sort of power to govern those subject to him. Thus, the character of a principle belongs to him insofar as he has governance over others. By contrast, from the fact that someone has a perfection of knowledge or virtue, he does not receive the character of a principle with respect to others; instead, he has only a certain sort of excellence or superiority within himself. And this is why there is a virtue [viz., respectfulness] determined specifically toward showing honor and reverence to those who are placed in high office.

Still, since one is rendered *suitable* for the status of high office by knowledge and virtue and all other things of this sort, the reverence that is shown to individuals for *any* sort of excellence or superiority belongs to the same virtue [of respectfulness].

Reply to objection 3: It belongs to *specific* justice taken properly to repay *in full* (*reddere aequale*) the one to whom something is owed. But this cannot be done in the case of the virtuous, or in the case of those who make good use of the status of high office, or in the case of God, or in the case of one's parents. And so this belongs to a certain associated virtue, [viz., respectfulness], but not to specific justice, which is the principal virtue.

On the other hand, as has been explained (q. 58, aa. 5-6), *legal* justice extends to the acts of *all* the virtues.

Article 2

Does respectfulness involve showing veneration and honor to those who are placed in high office?

It seems that respectfulness does not involve showing veneration and honor to those who are placed in high office:

Objection 1: As Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 10, we are said to venerate (*colere*) those persons whom we hold in some honor, and so veneration (*cultus*) seems to be the same thing as honor (*honor*). Therefore, it is inappropriate to specify that respectfulness shows veneration *and* honor to those who are placed in high office.

Objection 2: Justice involves repaying a debt. Hence, respectfulness, which is posited as a part of justice, involves this, too. But we owe veneration and honor only to *those who have authority over us* (*solum his qui super nos praelationem habent*), and not to *everyone* who is placed in high office. Therefore, it is inappropriate to specify that respectfulness shows veneration and honor to the latter.

Objection 3: We owe to our superiors who are placed in high office not only honor, but also fear and the bestowal of things that are due (*munerum largitio*)—this according to Romans 13:7 (“Render to everyone what is due: tribute (*tributum*) to those to whom tribute is due, taxes (*vectigal*) to those to whom taxes are due, fear (*timor*) to those to whom fear is due, honor (*honor*) to those to whom honor is due”). We owe them reverence (*reverentia*) and submission (*subiectio*) as well—this according to Hebrews 13:17 (“Obey those in authority over you, and be subject to them”). Therefore, it is inappropriate to specify that respectfulness shows [only] veneration and honor.

But contrary to this: Tully says, “Respectfulness is that through which men of high office are deemed worthy of a certain veneration and honor.”

I respond: Those who are placed in high office are involved in governing their subjects. Moreover, to govern is to move certain individuals toward a fitting end, in the way that a sailor governs a ship by leading it to port.

Now every mover has a certain superiority (*excellencia*) and a certain power (*virtus*) over what is moved. Hence, in the one who is placed in a high office the first thing that has to be considered is his *superiority of status*, along with a certain *power over his subjects*; and the second thing that has to be considered is *the office of governing itself*.

Therefore, by reason of their *superiority*, they are owed *honor*, which is a certain recognition of the superiority or excellence of another. On the other hand, by reason of the office of *governance*, they are owed reverence, which consists in a certain sort of *service (obsequium)*, viz., when someone obeys their commands and pays them back in his own way for the benefits received from them.

Reply to objection 1: ‘Veneration’ (*cultus*) means not only honor but, in addition, everything else that involves the appropriate acts by which one man is ordered toward another.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (q. 80), there are two sorts of debt:

The one is a *legal debt*, which a man is compelled by law to pay back. And it is in this sense that a man owes honor and veneration to those who are placed in high office and have authority over him.

The other sort of debt is a *moral debt*, which is owed out of a certain moral uprightness (*quod ex quadam honestate debetur*). And it is in this sense that we owe veneration and honor to those who are placed in high office, even if we are not subject to them.

Reply to objection 3: It is by reason of their higher rank that *honor* is due to the superiority of those who are placed in high office, whereas *fear* is owed to them by reason of the power of coercion that they possess. On the other hand, what is owed to their office of governance are (a) *obedience*, through which their subjects are moved at the command of those in charge, and (b) *tributes*, which are like stipends for their labor.

Article 3

Is respectfulness a more important virtue than piety?

It seems that respectfulness is a more important virtue than piety (*observantia sit potior virtus quam pietas*):

Objection 1: A civil leader (*princeps*), to whom veneration is shown by [the virtue of] respectfulness, is related to a father, who is venerated by means of [the virtue of] piety, in the way that a universal governor is related to a particular governor; for a family, which a father governs, is a part of a political community (*pars civitatis*), which is governed by a civil leader. But a universal power is more important, and lower things are more subject to it. Therefore, respectfulness is a more important virtue than piety.

Objection 2: Those who are placed in high office exercise care over the common good. But blood relatives have to do with a private good, which has to be set aside for the sake of the common good; hence, those who expose themselves to the danger of death for the sake of the common good are praiseworthy. Therefore, respectfulness, through which veneration is shown to those who are placed in high office, is more important than piety, which shows veneration to persons joined to us by blood.

Objection 3: After God, it is the virtuous who especially deserve honor and reverence. But as has been explained (a. 1), honor and reverence are shown to the virtuous through [the virtue of] respectfulness. Therefore, respectfulness is the principal virtue after [the virtue of] religion.

But contrary to this: The precepts of the Law are given concerning virtuous acts. But immediately after the precepts that belong to religion, which belong to the first tablet, there is added the

precept about honoring one's parents, which has to do with [the virtue of] piety. Therefore, piety immediately follows religion in the order of importance (*ordine dignitatis*).

I respond: There are two ways in which something can be given to persons placed in high office:

First, *in relation to the common good*, e.g., when someone serves them in administering the republic. This no longer involves respectfulness, but instead involves piety, which shows veneration not only to one's father, but also to one's fatherland or country (*sed etiam patriae*).

In the second way, something that pertains specifically *to their personal advantage or glory* is given to persons placed in high office. And this is what properly belongs to respectfulness insofar as it is distinguished from piety.

And so a comparison between respectfulness and piety must pay attention to the diverse relationships of the different persons to us that each of the two virtues look to.

Now it is clear that the persons of our parents and blood relatives are conjoined to us in a more substantial way than are the persons who are placed in high office. For generation and education, which the father is a principle of, belong more to our substance than does the exterior governance whose principle lies in those who are placed in high office. Accordingly, piety is preeminent over respectfulness insofar as it renders veneration to persons who are more closely conjoined to us and to whom we have a greater obligation (*quibus magis obligamur*).

Reply to objection 1: It is with respect to *exterior governance* that a civic leader is compared to a father as a universal power to a particular power, but not with respect to the father's being a principle of *generation*. For in that sense it is the divine power, which produces all things into being, which is comparable to a father.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, insofar as persons placed in high office are ordered toward the common good, venerating them belongs not to respectfulness, but to piety.

Reply to objection 3: The showing of honor and veneration should be proportioned not only to the person to whom it is shown taken in his own right, but also to the way in which he is related to those showing the honor and veneration. Therefore, even though the virtuous, considered in their own right, might be more worthy of honor than the persons of one's parents, nonetheless, children, because of the benefits they have received and because of their natural connectedness, are more obligated to show veneration and honor to their parents than to extraneous virtuous people.