

QUESTION 134

Magnificence

Next we have to consider magnificence (*magnificentia*) (question 134) and the vices opposed to it (question 135). Concerning magnificence there are four questions: (1) Is magnificence a virtue? (2) Is magnificence a specific virtue? (3) What is the subject matter of magnificence? (4) Is magnificence a part of fortitude?

Article 1

Is magnificence a virtue?

It seems that magnificence is not a virtue:

Objection 1: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 65, a. 1), an individual who has one virtue has all the virtues. But someone can have other virtues without having magnificence, since as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 4, “Not every generous individual is magnificent.” Therefore, magnificence is not a virtue.

Objection 2: As *Ethics* 2 explains, a moral virtue consists in a mean. But magnificence does not seem to consist in a mean. For it surpasses generosity in its magnitude. But *large* is opposed to *small* as an extreme, and, as *Metaphysics* 10 points out, their mean is *equal*. And so magnificence consists not in a mean, but in an extreme. Therefore, it is not a virtue.

Objection 3: As was established above (q. 108, a. 2 and q. 117, a. 1), no virtue is contrary to a natural inclination; instead, a virtue perfects a natural inclination. But as the Philosopher puts it in *Ethics* 4, “A magnificent individual is not extravagant with himself”—which is contrary to the natural inclination by which someone provides as much as possible for himself. Therefore, magnificence is not a virtue.

Objection 4: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 6, an art or craft (*ars*) is “right reason with respect to what is makeable.” But as is clear from the name itself, magnificence has to do with things that are makeable. Therefore, magnificence is an art or craft rather than a virtue.

But contrary to this: Human virtue is a sort of a participation in God’s power or virtue (*virtus humana est participatio quaedam virtutis divinae*). But magnificence belongs to God’s power—this according to Psalm 67:35 (“His magnificence and His power are in the clouds”). Therefore, magnificence is a virtue.

I respond: As *De Caelo* 1 says, “‘Virtue’ is predicated in relation to the ultimate of which a power is capable”—not, to be sure, in relation to the ultimate on the side of *deficiency*, but in relation to the ultimate on the side of *excess*, the nature of which consists in *greatness*. And so *to do something great*, from which the name ‘magnificence’ is taken, properly belongs to the nature of a virtue. Therefore, ‘magnificence’ names a virtue.

Reply to objection 1: The reason why not all generous individuals are magnificent in their *acts* is that they lack the wherewithal which one must make use of for a magnificent act. Yet, as was explained above when we were talking about the connectedness of the virtues (*ST* 1-2, q. 65, a. 1), every generous individual does have the *habit* of magnificence, either in actuality or in a proximate disposition.

Reply to objection 2: Magnificence does, to be sure, consist in an *extreme* if one considers the quantity of what it does. But it nonetheless consists in a *mean* if one considers the rule of reason, which it does not fall short of and which it does not exceed—just as was explained above (q. 129, a. 3) in the case of magnanimity.

Reply to objection 3: Magnificence involves doing something great. But what belongs to the person of each individual is something small in comparison to what is appropriate for divine things or for communal things. And so a magnificent individual does not mainly intend to make expenditures in those matters that pertain to his own person—not because he does not seek his own good, but because seeking

his own good is not something great.

Still, if something among those matters pertaining to himself has greatness, then the magnificent individual will accomplish them in a magnificent manner—for instance, as *Ethics* 4 points out, “events that occur just once, such as a wedding or something else of this sort,” or, again, certain things that are permanent, as, for instance, in the way that it pertains to a magnificent individual “to lay out resources for a suitable dwelling place.”

Reply to objection 4: As the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 6, “An art or craft requires virtue,” i.e., *moral* virtue through which the appetite is inclined to use the nature of the art in an upright way. And this pertains to magnificence. Hence, magnificence is a virtue and not an art or a craft.

Article 2

Is magnificence a specific virtue?

It seems that magnificence is not a specific virtue:

Objection 1: Magnificence seems to involve doing or making something great. But *doing (making) something great* can belong to *any* virtue if that virtue is great; for instance, one who has a great virtue of temperance does great works belonging to temperance. Therefore, magnificence is not one of the specific virtues, but instead ‘magnificence’ signifies the perfected state of *any* virtue.

Objection 2: *Doing (making) something* seems to belong to the same thing to which *tending toward that thing* belongs. But as was explained above (q. 129, a. 1), *tending toward something great* belongs to magnanimity. Therefore, *doing (making) something great* likewise belongs to magnanimity. Therefore, magnificence is not a virtue that is distinct from magnanimity.

Objection 3: Magnificence seems to pertain to holiness; for Exodus 15:11 says, “... magnificent in holiness ...,” and Psalm 95:6 says, “... holiness and magnificence in His sanctuary.” But as was established above (q. 81, a. 8), [the virtue of] holiness is the same as [the virtue of] religion. Therefore, *magnificence* seems to be the same as *religion*. Therefore, magnificence is not a specific virtue distinct from other virtues.

But contrary to this: The Philosopher numbers magnificence among the other specific virtues.

I respond: As is clear from its very name, magnificence involves *doing or making something great*. Now there are two ways to understand *doing (making) something great*: (a) *properly (proprie)* and (b) *generally (communiter)*.

An individual is *properly speaking* said to do (make) something (*facere*) when he makes something in exterior matter (*operari aliquid in exteriori materia*), e.g., makes a house or something else of this sort. On the other hand, one is *generally speaking* said to do (make) something in the case of *any* sort of action, whether that action passes into exterior matter, e.g., to burn or cut something, or whether it remains within the agent himself, e.g., to understand or to will.

Therefore, if magnificence is taken insofar as it implies the doing or making of something great, where ‘doing’ (‘making’) is taken in the *proper* sense, then magnificence is a specific virtue. For a work that can be made is produced by an art or craft (*opus factibile producitur ab arte*). And in the use of an art or craft the fact that the work made by means of the art or craft is great, e.g., in size or in value or in dignity, is a specific sort of goodness that can be attended to. This is the sort of thing that magnificence makes. And on this score magnificence is a specific virtue.

If, on the other hand, the name ‘magnificence’ is taken for *doing (making) something great* in accord with the *general* sense of doing or making, then magnificence is not a specific virtue.

Reply to objection 1: *To do or make something great in its genus* belongs to every perfect virtue insofar as *doing* or *making* is taken in the *general* sense, but not insofar as it is taken in the *proper*

sense—and it is the latter sense that is proper to magnificence.

Reply to objection 2: *Magnanimity* involves not only *tending* toward something great but also, as *Ethics 4* explains, *doing* something great in all the virtues, either by making something or by acting in any way whatsoever—yet in such a way that magnanimity focuses solely on the notion *great*.

By contrast, the other virtues, which do great things if they are perfect, do not principally direct their intention toward what is *great*, but instead direct it toward what is proper to each virtue, where the magnitude [of the act] follows from the quantity of the virtue.

Magnificence, on the other hand, involves not only doing or making something great, where ‘doing’ or ‘making’ is taken in the proper sense, but also tending in spirit (*tendere animo*) toward doing or making what is great. Hence, in *Rhetorica* Tully says, “Magnificence involves thinking up and overseeing great and lofty projects with a broad and noble purpose of mind”—where “thinking up” refers to the individual’s interior intention and “overseeing” refers to the exterior execution. Hence, it must be the case that just as *magnanimity* intends something great in *every* subject matter, *magnificence* tends toward what is great in works that are makeable [in exterior matter].

Reply to objection 3: Magnificence intends to do or to make some great work. Now the works made by men are ordered toward some end. But no end of human works is as great as honoring God. And so magnificence makes its great work in order to honor God. Hence, in *Ethics 4* the Philosopher says, “The most commendable expenditures are those that pertain to divine sacrifices, and the magnificent individual is especially eager for this.” And so magnificence is joined to holiness because its effect is principally ordered toward religion, i.e., toward holiness.

Article 3

Are great expenditures the subject matter of magnificence?

It seems that great expenditures are not the subject matter of magnificence:

Objection 1: It is not the case that there are two virtues for the same subject matter. But as was established above (q. 117, a. 2), with respect to expenditures there is *generosity* (*liberalitas*). Therefore, magnificence does not have to do with expenditures.

Objection 2: As *Ethics 4* says, “Every magnificent individual is generous.” But generosity has more to do with gifts than with expenditures. Therefore, magnificence is likewise not mainly about expenditures, but more about gifts.

Objection 3: Magnificence involves making or doing an exterior work. But it is not the case that an exterior work is made with every expenditure, even if the expenditure is great—e.g., when someone spends a lot in making gifts. Therefore, expenditures are not the *proper* matter of magnificence.

Objection 4: Only the rich can make great expenditures. But even the poor can have all the virtues, since, as Seneca points out in *De Ira*, the virtues are sufficient unto themselves and do not necessarily require exterior fortune. Therefore, magnificence does not have to do with great expenditures.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics 4* the Philosopher says, “Magnificence, unlike generosity, does not extend to all transactions involving money, but extends only to the expensive ones, in which it exceeds generosity in magnitude.” Therefore, magnificence has to do only with great expenditures.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 2), magnificence involves making or doing some great work. Now for something great to be done or made in a fitting way, commensurate expenditures are required; for great works cannot be made without great expenses. Hence, magnificence involves making great expenditures in order for a great work to be made in a fitting way. This is why in *Ethics 4* the Philosopher says, “The magnificent individual will make a more magnificent work with equal, i.e., commensurate, expenditures.” Moreover, an expenditure is a sort of outpouring of money by which one

can be prevented from having an excessive love of money.

And so the subject matter of magnificence can be said to be (a) *the expenditures themselves* that the magnificent individual uses in order to make or do a great work, and (b) *the money itself* that he uses to make or do great things, and (c) *the love of money*, which he moderates lest there be obstacles to the great expenditures.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above (q. 129, a. 2), the virtues that have to do with exterior things pose one sort of difficulty because of *the genus of the thing that a virtue has to do with* and a second sort of difficulty because of *the magnitude of the thing itself*.

And so there have to be *two* virtues with respect to money and its use, viz., *generosity*, which has to do with the use of money *in general*, and *magnificence*, which has to do with *greatness* in the use of money.

Reply to objection 2: The use of money pertains to the generous individual in one way and to the magnificent individual in another way.

For the use of money pertains to the generous individual insofar as it proceeds from well-ordered affections with respect to money. And so generosity involves *every instance* of the appropriate use of money, viz., in giving gifts and in making expenditures, where the moderation of one's love of money removes obstacles to the appropriate use of money. By contrast, the use of money pertains to the magnificent individual *in relation to a great work that is to be done or made*. And no such use of money can exist unless it is an expenditure or disbursement.

Reply to objection 3: As *Ethics* 4 points out, a magnificent individual also gives gifts and presents, but not under the concept of a gift. Instead, he does so under the concept of an expenditure that is ordered toward making or doing some work, e.g., honoring someone, or making or doing something that brings honor to the whole city, as when an individual does or makes something that the whole city is enthusiastic about.

Reply to objection 4: The principal act of a virtue is the interior act of choice, which the virtue can have without exterior fortune. And so even the poor can be magnificent.

On the other hand, the goods of fortune are indeed required for exterior acts as certain instruments. And on this score the poor cannot exercise exterior acts of magnificence in those matters that are great absolutely speaking, but they can perhaps exercise acts of magnificence in those matters that are great in relation to a work which, even if it is small in its own right, can nonetheless be done in a magnificent manner in relation to its genus. For *small* and *great* are relative terms, as the Philosopher points out in the *Categories*.

Article 4

Is magnificence a part of fortitude?

It seems that magnificence is not a part of fortitude:

Objection 1: As has been said (a. 3), magnificence agrees in subject matter with generosity. But generosity is a part of *justice* and not a part of *fortitude*. Therefore, magnificence is not a part of fortitude.

Objection 2: Fortitude has to do with fear and daring. But magnificence seems not at all to look to fear; instead, it looks only to expenditures, which are certain operations. Therefore, magnificence seems to belong to *justice*, which has to do with operations, rather than to *fortitude*.

Objection 3: In *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher says, "The magnificent individual is similar to someone with knowledge." But knowledge fits in with *prudence* rather than with *fortitude*. Therefore, magnificence should not be posited as a part of fortitude.

But contrary to this: Tully and Macrobius and Andronicus posit magnificence as a part of fortitude.

I respond: Insofar as magnificence is a specific virtue, it cannot be posited as a subjective part of fortitude, since it does not agree with fortitude in subject matter. However, magnificence is posited as a part of fortitude insofar as it is *adjoined to* fortitude in the way that a secondary virtue is adjoined to a principal virtue.

Now as was explained above (q. 80), two things are required in order for a virtue to be adjoined to a principal virtue. One of them is that the secondary virtue fits in with the principal virtue; the second is that it is exceeded in some way by the principal virtue.

Now magnificence agrees with fortitude in the fact that just as fortitude tends toward something arduous and difficult, so, too, does magnificence; hence, magnificence seems to exist in the irascible part [of the soul] in the same way that fortitude does. On the other hand, magnificence falls short of fortitude in the fact that the arduous thing toward which fortitude tends involves difficulty because of danger that threatens one's person, whereas the arduous thing toward which magnificence tends involves difficulty because of the cost of things—which is much less a difficulty than danger to one's person. And so magnificence is posited as a part of fortitude.

Reply to objection 1: Justice has to do with operations in their own right insofar as the concept *what is owed* is considered in them. By contrast, generosity and magnificence have to do with operations of expenditure in relation to passions of the soul—though in different ways. For generosity looks at expenditure in relation to the *love of and desire for money*, and these are concupiscible passions by which the generous individual is not impeded in making donations and expenditures, and so generosity exists in the concupiscible part [of the soul]. By contrast, magnificence looks at expenditures in relation to *hope* by attaining something that is arduous *not absolutely speaking*, as with magnanimity, but *in a determinate subject matter*, viz., in expenditures. Hence, magnificence seems to exist in the irascible part in the same way that magnanimity does.

Reply to objection 2: Even if magnificence does not agree with fortitude in its *subject matter*, it nonetheless does agree with it the *condition* of its subject matter, viz., insofar as it tends toward something arduous with respect to *expenditures* in the same way that fortitude tends toward something arduous with respect to *fears*.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained (a. 2), magnificence orders its use of arts or crafts toward something great. But an art or craft exists in the intellect. And so being magnificent involves making good use of reason in measuring out *expenditures* to the *work* that is to be done or made. And this is necessary mainly because of the magnitude of both of them, since unless a diligent consideration is made, the danger of a great loss threatens.