

WHAT DOES ST. THOMAS MAKE OF ARISTOTELIAN RELIGION?

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In his survey of late-1990s publications touching upon St. Thomas, Fr. Bonino speaks of a widespread contemporary “reaction against a philosophizing – not to say, rationalizing – reading of the works of Aquinas”, a reaction stressing “the necessity of taking more resolutely into account their fundamentally theological dimension”. He also notes, however, that “by a sort of implacable fatality attaching to every historiographical reaction, this ‘re-theologizing’ does not come without excess”.¹ He goes on then to bring into relief instances of such excess in the publications he reviews and, where necessary, to suggest alternative more balanced, more philosophical readings of the relevant texts. The present essay aspires to this same spirit. It attempts to show that Thomas’s virtue of religion is fundamentally Aristotelian – and philosophical – even while acknowledging that the perfect virtue of religion is decidedly not Aristotelian but quite beyond his (or any) merely philosophical powers.

The overall structure of this essay is simple. The first section concerns Thomas’s use of Aristotelian concepts in his analysis of the virtue of religion; the second, his positive regard for Aristotelian religion. The third and final section considers Thomas’s ultimate judgment that Aristotelian religion is imperfect.

¹ Serge-Thomas Bonino, “Thomistica (V)”, *Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999): 595. Excessive “re-theologizing” can be discerned with respect to the virtue of religion in Bonnie Kent [Bonnie Dorrick Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The transformation of ethics in the late thirteenth century* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 32] and Jean Porter [Jean Porter, “The Virtue of Justice (IIa IIae, Qq. 58-122)”, in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 279]. In this essay, I adopt the convention, now common in philosophical circles, of reserving double inverted commas (“...”) for genuine quotations and things to which I wish to call attention as surprising or non-standard – that is, as scare quotes. I use single inverted commas (‘...’) for all other appropriate uses, such as for the mention of an English term or for a concept or for quotations within quotations. In quoting Latin phrases, I use double inverted commas; but, when discussing a Latin term or phrase as such, I use italics.

I. The Aristotelian character of the virtue of religion

There is no denying that there were multiple influences besides Aristotle's upon Thomas's understanding of the virtue of religion. Indeed, in reading through question 80 of the *Secunda secundae*, where Thomas first introduces the "potential parts" of the virtue of justice – religion, piety, gratitude, vindication, observance, truth – and then question 81, where he discusses the first on this list (religion), one is struck by the strong presence of ancient philosophers other than Aristotle. The list itself comes from Cicero: Aristotle offers nothing similar, never speaking of religion as a *part* of justice. In the same article (*ST 1-2.80 articulus unicus*), alternatives to the list are also mentioned: one by Macrobius, the other by one whom Thomas thought was Andronicus of Rhodes.² Thomas argues that their lists are not incompatible with Cicero's. Also worth mentioning is the strong presence, especially in question 81, of Augustine, whose position on the pagan virtues is often regarded as pushing Thomas away from recognition of Aristotelian virtues as genuine virtues.

These indications notwithstanding, Thomas's virtue of religion is, with respect to its structure and to a significant extent its matter, Aristotelian. Let us begin with the latter: the matter. One objection that might be made to associating Thomas's virtue too closely with Aristotle would be that, when he does speak of a relationship between man and God (or the gods), Aristotle speaks not of justice but rather of friendship. In response to this

² Macrobius, praetorian prefect of Italy in 430 A.D., displays in his works a nostalgia for the classical era and an ambivalence towards Christianity; whoever compiled the work attributed to Andronicus was influenced by both Stoicism and eclectic peripatetic philosophy. On Macrobius's attitude towards Christianity, see Alan Cameron, "The date and identity of Macrobius", *Journal of Roman Studies* 56 (1966): 34-37. On the authorship of the work attributed to Andronicus – Περὶ παθῶν or (as Thomas knew it) *De passionibus* – see Paul Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias: Die Renaissance des Aristotelismus im I. Jh. v. Chr.*, vol. 1 (Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1973), 140-41. Moraux notes that the author of the work uses Stoic definitions of the virtues, although, where they speak of a virtue as an ἐπιστήμη, the author substitutes the word ἔξις. We find a similar thing, notes Moraux, in the first century B.C. Arius Didymus (see also Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen von Andronikos bis Alexander von Aphrodisias: Die Renaissance des Aristotelismus im I. Jh. v. Chr.*, 394). It is also worth noting that at *Sent.* 3.33.3.1 *quaestiuncula* 4 (§267), Thomas speaks of Andronicus simply as "a certain Greek philosopher" ["A quodam philosopho graeco..."]. (The number in round brackets is the paragraph number found in the Paris edition of the commentary: Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi Episcopi Parisiensis*, edd Pierre Mandonnet & Maria Fabianus Moos [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929-47].)

objection, it might be pointed out first that, even in the fifth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* [EN 5], Aristotle's most extensive treatise on justice, he does mention the gods, saying at one point that whatever justice pertains to them is immutable [EN 5.7.1134b28–29] and then suggesting that they participate in things good in themselves in such a way that they “cannot have too much of them” [EN 5.9.1137a28–29].³ (Such characteristics, we shall see, have a bearing upon the type of relationship we might have with God in religious practice). But even in EN 8, the first of Aristotle's two books on friendship, he recognizes a certain correspondence between friendship and justice.⁴

He says, for instance, in the first chapter of that book that friendship seems to:

hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy; and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality [1155a22–28].

Reporting here what the “lawgivers” say, Aristotle seems to waver between saying that friendship is justice and that it is not; but in the end he plumps for the idea that the truest form of justice is “friendly” [φιλικόν].

Later in EN 8, referring back to this passage, he says that “friendship and justice seem, as we have said at the outset of our discussion, to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons” [EN 8.9.1159b25–26] and then: “the demands of justice also naturally increase with the friendship, which implies that friendship and justice exist between the same persons and have an equal extension” [EN 8.9.1160a7–8]. Commenting upon these remarks, Thomas says first that

justice and friendship are about the same things; but justice consists in assigning portions, for any justice is directed toward another, as

³ For Aristotelian translations in this paper, I make use of J. Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) – occasionally, however, altering a translation slightly for reasons of consistency.

⁴ The question of the exact nature of the relationship between friendship and justice is a complicated one. See Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX*, trans. and ed. Michael Pakaluk, Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford/New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), 94–96, 107–15, 122–24, 133–35.

is stated in book five [of the *Nicomachean Ethics*]. And so friendship consists in a portioning.⁵

And then:

The fact that justice and friendship increase together proceeds from this: that they exist in the same things and that each pertains to a certain equality of portion.⁶

Even given, however, this close connection between justice and friendship, another Aristotelian principle would seem to militate against the thesis that Thomas's virtue of religion is Aristotelian – and that is the principle that friendship is between equals. At one point in *EN* 7, for instance, Aristotle says that, when “there is a great interval in respect of excellence or vice or wealth or anything else between the parties”, friends can no longer be friends. “And this is most manifest”, he adds, “in the case of the gods [ἐπὶ τῶν θεῶν], for they surpass us most decisively in all good things” [*EN* 7.7.1158b33–36].⁷ But in the subsequent book he also says that “the friendship of children to parents, and of men to gods, is a relation to them as to something good and superior”.⁸ The relationship may indeed be one of respect and honor, but it is still friendship.

In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle gives a fuller explanation of how this works. The three basic categories friendship – friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure, and friendship of virtue – are each to be divided, he says, into two: friendship according to equality [φιλία κατὰ τὸ ἴσον] and friendship according to preeminence [φιλία καθ' ὑπεροχὴν] [*EE* 7.4.1239a1–4]; and he identifies friendship with God [τὸν θεόν] as an instance of the latter [*EE* 7.4.1239a17–19]. This is not to say, however, that men can be *friends* with God. Both friendship according to equality and friendship according to preeminence are *friendships*, he says, “but only those, between whom there is equality, are friends” [*EE* 7.4.1239a4–5]. Aristotle does not say here whether friendship according to preeminence might concern utility

⁵ “Sicut supra dictum est, circa eadem est iustitia et amicitia. Sed iustitia consistit in communicatione. Quaelibet est enim iustitia ad alterum, ut in V dictum est. Ergo et amicitia in communicatione consistit” [*in EN* 8.9.2 (§1658)].

⁶ “Quod autem simul augetur amicitia et iustum, procedit ex hoc, quod in eisdem existunt, et utrumque pertinet ad quamdam aequalitatem communicationis” [*in EN* 8.9.8 (§1664)].

⁷ And a few lines later he remarks: “...when one party is removed to a great distance, as God is [οἶον τοῦ θεοῦ], the possibility of friendship ceases” [1159a5].

⁸ ἔστι δ' ἡ μὲν πρὸς γονεῖς φιλία τέκνοις, καὶ ἀνθρώποις πρὸς θεοῦς, ὡς πρὸς ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὑπερέχον [*EN* 8.12.1162a4–5]. See also *EN* 8.10.1160b25–26.

and/or pleasure; but, since the gods “surpass us most decisively in all good things”, it is apparent that it will at least concern (in some way) virtue.

But the one who objects to the claim that Thomas’s virtue of religion (at least in its acquired form) is materially Aristotelian might keep pushing. “You have demonstrated convincingly enough”, he might say, “that Aristotle speaks extensively about man’s relationship with the divine. But *Thomas* does not say that religion is a part of friendship: he says rather that it is a part – a ‘potential part’ – of justice”.

The passage in Thomas that best addresses the objection is found in the third book of the commentary on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*. For there Thomas explains that what allows him to place religion within justice (as a potential part) is what Aristotle says – when speaking of *friendship* – regarding the peculiar nature of religion. The general question asked in the article [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4] is whether Cicero’s assigning religion, piety, gratitude, vindication, observance, and truth, to justice is mistaken (“Videtur quod partes iustitiae male assignentur a Tullio”). The very first objection in the first *quaestiuncula* cites in fact *EN* 8 (as we have seen, the first book of Aristotle’s treatise on friendship) to the effect that Aristotle says there that there can be no justice between a servant and his lord. “But God is maximally Lord; and so, since religion is between man and God, it seems that religion is not part of justice”.⁹ So, it is clear right from the start of this argument that Cicero’s assigning certain virtues to the cardinal virtue of justice stands or falls according to whether it is consistent with what Aristotle says – and, with respect to religion, with what he says in his remarks about friendship. In the six *quaestiunculae* that follow and in Thomas’s solutions and responses, the issue whether his understanding of religion is genuinely Aristotelian remains predominant.

In the corpus corresponding to that first *quaestiuncula*, Thomas draws a distinction between a subjective part of justice and a potential part. By

⁹ “Quia philosophus dicit in 8 Ethic., quod servi ad dominum non potest esse iustitia. Sed Deus maxime dominus est. Ergo cum religio sit hominis ad Deum, videtur quod non sit pars iustitiae” [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1 obi.1 (§367)]. The passage in Aristotle referred to runs as follows: “For where there is nothing common to ruler and ruled, there is not friendship either, since there is not justice; e.g., between craftsman and tool, soul and body, master and slave; the latter in each case is benefited by that which uses it, but there is no friendship nor justice towards lifeless things. But neither is there friendship towards a horse or an ox, nor to a slave *qua* slave. For there is nothing common to the two parties; the slave is a living tool and the tool a lifeless slave” [*EN* 8.11.1161a32-b5]. On notes again the close association of friendship with justice.

definition, justice involves in some way an *adaequatio* (a “making equal”) of what and how much there is owed to another person. A virtue in which the *adaequatio* is complete is called a subjective part; when the *adaequatio* cannot be complete but is qualified in some way, the result is a potential part: a “participant” in the way that justice works.¹⁰ Examples of subjective parts (from Cicero’s list) would be vindication and observance, for when just vindication or observance are achieved, respectively either an equality-establishing amount of bad or an equality-establishing amount of good is awarded to the other person.

Examples of potential parts would be religion and piety. Thomas writes:

Religion, which is directed toward God, and piety, which is towards parents and those related by blood or nationality, are potential parts – but close potential parts, for they render *what* they owe (also out of legal obligation) but not *as much* as they owe, for that is impossible [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1c].¹¹

But this idea that man can never return to God as much as he owes comes from Aristotle’s treatise on friendship.¹² Thomas’s acceptance of Cicero’s list hinges, therefore, upon its compatibility with Aristotle and what he says about religion’s never being able quantitatively to recompense the giver in equal fashion. Thomas’s specific – and very brief – answer to the first objection (that, according to Aristotle, there can be no justice between a servant and his lord) is that it “proves that religion is not a subjective part of justice – not, however, that it is not a proximate potential part”.¹³

¹⁰ Speaking of the *adaequatio* involved in justice, Thomas writes: “Et haec quidem adaequatio est quando ei redditur quod et quantum ei debetur; et haec adaequatio proprius modus iustitiae est. Unde ubicumque invenitur ista adaequatio complete, est iustitia quae est virtus specialis; et omnes virtutes in quibus salvatur, sunt partes subiectivae iustitiae. Ubi autem ista adaequatio non secundum totum salvatur, sed secundum aliquid, reducit ad iustitiam ut pars potentialis, aliquid de modo ejus participans” [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1c (§§376–77)].

¹¹ “Religio autem quae est ad Deum, et pietas quae est ad parentes et conjunctos sanguine vel patria, sunt partes potenciales, sed propinquae: quia reddunt quod debent, et ex obligatione legis, sed non quantum; quia impossibile est” [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1c (§385)]. A bit earlier in the same argument he writes: “Sunt autem quaedam virtutes quibus redditur alteri quod debetur ex necessitate legis, non tamen tantum, quia impossibile est; sicut in honore qui est ad Deum, quod facit religio; et qui ad parentes et ad patriam, quod facit pietas. Unde istae virtutes deficiunt quidem a iustitia, et sunt partes ejus potenciales, et propinquissime se habent ad ipsam” [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1c (§379)].

¹² See especially *EN* 8.7.1158b29–36.

¹³ “...objectio illa probat quod religio non sit pars subiectiva iustitiae; non autem

That brings us to the other issue mentioned above, that is, whether the *structure* of Thomas's virtue of religion is Aristotelian. That Thomas describes this structure in Aristotelian terms – and does so plausibly – gives support to the previous arguments (regarding the Aristotelian character of the virtue itself); but knowing something about how he understands this structure will also be useful below – in particular, when considering the ways in which Aristotelian religion is imperfect.

At *ST* 2-2.81.5, Thomas explains why the virtue of religion cannot be considered a theological virtue. The very *object* of a theological virtue, he says, is the ultimate end (that is, the vision of the divine essence).¹⁴ The object of the virtue of religion is (or are) the acts that man does as an (admittedly inadequate) response to God's magnificence and magnanimity. God (the divine essence) comes into this structure as the end towards which these acts are directed; but religion itself is primarily in its proper acts. Thomas puts it this way:

Due worship is offered to God in as much as certain acts, by which God is worshipped, are performed in reverence of him, for instance, offerings of sacrifices and other such things. Thus it is apparent that God is related to the virtue of religion not as material or object but as end. And so religion is not a theological virtue, whose object is the ultimate end, but a moral virtue, whose being is directed toward those things that are *for* the end.¹⁵

quod non sit pars potentialis propinqua" [*Sent.* 3.33.3.4.1 ad 1 (§387)]. R.E. Houser maintains that the concept of a potential part comes from the Stoic Chrysippus [R.E. Houser, ed. and trans., *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert and Philip the Chancellor*, Mediaeval Sources in Translation (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2004), 24-25]. That may very well be true; but it is also true that religion qualifies as a potential part because of how it is understood by Aristotle in the treatise on friendship.

¹⁴ See *ST* 1-2.3.8: "Si igitur intellectus humanus, cognoscens essentiam alicuius effectus eatit, non cognoscat de Deo nisi an est; nondum perfectio eius attingit simpliciter ad causam primam, sed remanet ei adhuc eatitu desiderium inquirendi causam. Unde nondum est perfecte beatus. Ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. Et sic perfectionem suam habebit *per unionem ad Deum sicut ad obiectum*, in quo solo eatitude hominis consistit ...".

¹⁵ "Affertur autem Deo debitus cultus in quantum actus quidam, quibus Deus colitur, in Dei reverentiam fiunt, puta sacrificiorum oblationes et alia huiusmodi. Unde manifestum est quod Deus non comparatur ad virtutem religionis sicut materia vel obiectum, sed sicut finis. Et ideo religio non est virtus theologica, cuius obiectum est ultimus finis, sed est virtus moralis, cuius est esse circa ea quae sunt ad finem" [*ST* 2-2.81.5c].

It is God's superiority and our inability to effect a complete *adaequatio* in his regard that demands that he be end and not object. By contrast, with friends – who must be equals of each other in virtue and in other regards – they themselves become objects of their respective acts of friendship. This whole discourse is connected with Aristotle's idea that friends are "other selves".¹⁶ For Aristotle, strictly speaking, a man cannot be friends with himself, since friendship (like justice) requires two persons. But one can be friends with oneself in loving one's friend and loving oneself in that way. This allows one to have as the object of one's love what, strictly speaking, cannot be an object, for in loving one's friend one loves something distinct from oneself (an object); but, in that loving, one loves oneself.¹⁷

Earlier in the same corpus Thomas says that when, with the theological virtue of faith, we believe God [*credimus Deo*], we actually attain or touch [*atingimus*] him.¹⁸ In effect, Thomas is making here reference to a remark he has made earlier, in *ST* 2-2.2.2. An objection there argues that "believing that God is" ought not to be considered an act of *faith* since also non-believers (i.e., those without the theological virtue of faith) can believe that God is. Thomas's response is that such non-believers do not believe "that God is" in the way that is present in an act of faith (theological faith). "For they do not believe that God is, under those conditions that faith determines; and so they do not truly believe that God...",¹⁹ since, as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* (9.10), 'with regard to simple things,

¹⁶ See *EN* 9.4.1166a10-b2, 9.8.1168a28-1169b2; in Thomas, see *ST* 2-2.25.12.

¹⁷ On self-love in Aristotle, see *EE* 7.6.1140a7-b37 and *EN* 10.4.1166a1-b29. See also Kevin L. Flannery, *Action and Character according to Aristotle: The logic of the moral life* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 249-63. Also connected to the present discourse is the Aristotelian idea that we encounter the divine within ourselves: see *EN* 10.7.1177b26-1178a2 and *EE* 8.3.1249b9-15.

¹⁸ "Aliud autem est id cui affertur, scilicet Deus. Cui cultus exhibetur non quasi actus quibus Deus colitur ipsum Deum attingunt, sicut cum credimus Deo, credendo Deum attingimus (propter quod supra dictum est quod Deus est fidei obiectum non solum inquantum credimus Deum, sed inquantum credimus Deo)" [*ST* 2-2.81.5c].

¹⁹ I follow Alfred Freddoso and John O'Callaghan (in an as yet unpublished work) in my translations of *credere Deo* ('to believe God'), *credere in Deum* ('to believe in God'), and *credere Deum* ('to believe that God...'). According to O'Callaghan, the ellipsis in the latter expression (which comes from Freddoso) signifies that the act of believing might pertain to a variety of features of God: that God is just, for example, or that he is wise, or that he simply is. In *ST* 2-2.2.2 obi.3, Thomas uses the expression *credere Deum esse*; but in the corresponding response he refers to the same act as *credere Deum*, then as *credere Deum esse* ("credunt Deum esse"), and then as *credere Deum* ("nec vere Deum credunt").

the only defect of knowledge is in totally not touching [*in non attingendo totaliter*] [ST 2-2.2.2 ad 3]. Aristotle's point in *Metaph.* 9.10, from which chapter Thomas gets the term 'to touch' (*atingere* or *θιγγάνειν*), is that one's epistemological relationship with something that does not involve a predicate's holding of a subject – as when one *simply* recognizes that one stands before a dog (an instance of that essence) rather than knowing that 'this dog is white' – is of a correspondingly simple character. Truth, in such cases, Aristotle says, is "to have touched"; falsity is "not to touch" at all.²⁰ This is the idea behind Thomas's statement that the virtue of religion has God only as its end, not as its object. Without the theological virtue of faith, God might be that which makes sense of a person's life; but God is altogether absent for that person as an object.

II. Thomas's positive regard for Aristotelian religion

Any positive regard that Thomas might have with respect to someone's religion – or with respect to an author's way of conceiving the virtue of religion – depends upon whether the end of the religious actions in question is correctly understood. That is to say, the end toward which the actions are directed must be "the one supreme uncreated God".²¹ In the case of Aristotle, that end is correctly understood, although, according to Thomas, both he and Plato called also other intellectual substances 'gods' and offered *latria* to them,²² even though they recognized that they were not uncreated.²³ But, to the extent that Aristotle offered *latria* to the one

²⁰ τὸ μὲν θιγγεῖν καὶ φάσαι ἀληθές (οὐ γὰρ ταῦτ' ἀτάφασις καὶ φάσις), τὸ δ' ἄγνοεῖν μὴ θιγγάνειν... [*Metaph.* 9.10.1051b24–25].

²¹ "Debet autem ["divinus cultus"] exhiberi soli summo Deo increato, ut supra habitum est, cum de religione ageretur" [ST 2-2.94.1c]. The back-reference is to ST 2-2.81.1.

²² The word *latria* is Thomas's Latin transliteration of the Greek *λατρεία* ('service of the gods' or 'worship').

²³ See *Summa contra gentiles* 3.120.1 (§2918): "Fuerunt autem aliqui qui latriae cultum non solum primo rerum principio exhibendum aestimaverunt, sed omnibus etiam creaturis quae supra hominem sunt. Unde quidam, licet opinarentur Deum esse unum primum et universale rerum principium, latriam tamen exhibendam aestimaverunt, primo quidem post summum Deum, substantiis intellectualibus caelestibus, quas deos vocabant: sive essent substantiae omnino a corporibus separatae; sive essent animae orbium aut stellarum". Note that the second category of being toward which *latria* is due are creatures: "omnibus etiam creaturis quae supra hominem sunt" (see also 3.120.7 [§2927]). See also ST 2-2.94.1c: "Alii vero, scilicet Platonici, posuerunt unum esse summum Deum, causam omnium...". In these two places (*Summa contra gentiles* 3.120 and

supreme uncreated God, he practiced “true religion”.²⁴

Aristotle’s true religion is much tied up with what he says in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding the life of philosophical contemplation (or θεωρία), which is (as he says) “divine in comparison with human life” [EN 10.7.1177b30-31]. He acknowledges that there are some who would “advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things”; but he insists that we should reject this advice and “so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything” [EN 10.7.1177b31-1178a2].

Also, at the very end of the *Eudemian Ethics*,²⁵ Aristotle says “each of us should live according to the governing element within himself”, the “theoretical faculty”, which he associates with God [ὁ θεός] and also calls “the end with a view to which wisdom [φρόνησις] issues its commands” [EE 8.3.1249b9-15].

What choice, then, or possession of the natural goods – whether bodily goods, wealth, friends, or other things – will most produce the contemplation of God, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard, but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of God is bad; this a man possesses in his soul, and this is the best standard for the soul – to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible [EE 8.3.1249b16-23].

Aristotle here expressly links philosophical contemplation (θεωρία) with the service of God (τὸν θεὸν θεραπεύειν), that is, with religion. Aristotle did recognize that there is one supreme uncreated God.²⁶ To the extent

ST 2-2.94.1), drawing on Augustine [*De civitate Dei* 18.14], speaks only of Platonists; but, in Thomas’s *De substantiis separatis*, it becomes apparent that Aristotle can be included among those who recognize “the one supreme uncreated God” but also offer *latría* to other beings. (see especially chapters 1 through 4). There he also says that both Plato and Aristotle recognize that the other beings to whom they offer *latría* are created [*De substantiis separatis* 9.215-222 (§52)].

²⁴ In *ST* 2-2.94.1 ad 2 (and the corresponding objection), Thomas uses the expression “veram religionem” of *latría* offered to the proper end of the virtue of religion.

²⁵ Thomas knew this chapter – and knew that it was by Aristotle – through the separately circulating compilation *Liber de bona fortuna*. The *Liber de bona fortuna* in the translation of William of Moerbeke will be volume 28, edited by V. Cordonier, in the series *Aristoteles Latinus* (Brepols).

²⁶ See *Metaph.* 12.10.1075b24-1076a4; see also *Physics* 8.6.259a6-13.

that Aristotelian religion is directed toward this one God, it is true religion.

Thomas's Aristotelian virtue of religion is not, however, limited to the intellectual sphere; on the contrary, it is part of – and even dominates – the moral sphere. He understands it not only as the “foremost part of justice” but also as “preeminent among the other moral virtues”.²⁷ Someone might ask, ‘But how can that be, since it is merely a potential part even of justice?’ Thomas explains this in *ST 2-2.81.6*. The reason why it can be so preeminent in the moral life is not unconnected to its character as a potential part of justice.

As we have seen, religion is a potential part because of its inability to establish a complete *adaequatio* between man and God. The first objection in *ST 2-2.81.6* exploits this (what we might call) “falling short of justice” in order to argue that religion cannot, therefore, be “preferable” [“potior”] with respect to the other moral virtues. In response, Thomas says that the preeminence (or actually, “praise” [“laus”]) attaching to religion has nothing to do with its ability (or inability) to establish equality, but rather with the will of the person who exercises the virtue of religion. The will, of course, has to do with ends. All the moral virtues, are about things that are ordered toward God; “but religion”, he says, “approaches God more closely than the other moral virtues in as much as it does things that are directly and immediately ordered toward divine honor”.²⁸ It is for this reason that it is preeminent.

A consequence of this preeminence is that possession of the virtue of religion – even the natural, Aristotelian version – allows a person to be virtuous quite generally. As is Kevin O’Reilly, O.P., expresses it:

In the absence of religion the other virtues would not be directed to the honor of God. The absence of worship thus entails a decrease in the degree of the participation of the moral virtues in the divine

²⁷ Speaking of the precepts of the decalogue, Thomas says: “Unde tria prima praecepta sunt de actibus religionis, quae est potissima pars iustitiae” [*ST 2-2.122.1c*]. In *ST 2-2.81.6c*, he concludes: “Et ideo religio praeeminet inter alias virtutes morales”. In making this latter remark, he would seem to be saying that it is preeminent even with respect to justice itself.

²⁸ “Respondeo dicendum quod ea quae sunt ad finem sortuntur bonitatem ex ordine in finem, et ideo quanto sunt fini propinquiora, tanto sunt meliora. Virtutes autem morales, ut supra habitum est, sunt circa ea quae ordinantur in Deum sicut in finem. Religio autem magis de propinquo accedit ad Deum quam aliae virtutes morales, in quantum operatur ea quae directe et immediate ordinantur in honorem divinum. Et ideo religio praeeminet inter alias virtutes morales” [*ST 2-2.81.6c*].

goodness. This decrease in the degree of the participation of the moral virtues in the divine goodness in turn results in a greater level of disorder in the passions since passion (along with reason and habit) is intrinsic to the constitution of virtue.²⁹

In *ST* 2-2.93.2c, Thomas says that “the end of divine cult is for man to give glory to God and to subject himself to him in both mind and body”. Although, as we have seen, religion is immediately about the external acts one performs, in the ultimate analysis it is one’s internal state that counts. Thomas cites at this point Luke 17.21: “The kingdom of God is within you”, in effect indicating that the recognition of God as the ultimate end of all creation is an internal act.

Although Thomas is clearly thinking here of religion within a Christian context, elsewhere he acknowledges that certain pagans saw the connection between theory and piety. Commenting upon Aristotle’s statement that, although both friendship and truth “are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends”,³⁰ he cites the same work’s subsequent treatise on friendship. Says Thomas:

we ought to love truth more than man since we ought to love man chiefly on account of truth and virtue, as will be said in book eight [*EN* 8.5.1156b7-9]. Truth is a most excellent friend, to whom is due the reverence of honor; but truth is also something divine, for it is found first and principally in God.³¹

He then cites (again, the author whom he thought to be) Andronicus of

²⁹ Kevin E. O’Reilly, “The significance of worship in the thought of Thomas Aquinas: some reflections”, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2013): 461-62. O’Reilly cites in a note here *ST* 2-2.81.1 ad 1: “religio habet duplices actus. Quosdam quidem proprios et immediatos, quos elicit, per quos homo ordinatur ad solum Deum, sicut sacrificare, adorare et alia huiusmodi. Alios autem actus habet quos producit mediantibus virtutibus quibus imperat, ordinans eos in divinam reverentiam, quia scilicet virtus ad quam pertinet finis, imperat virtutibus ad quas pertinent ea quae sunt ad finem. Et secundum hoc actus religionis per modum imperii ponitur esse visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, quod est actus elicited a misericordia, immaculatum autem custodire se ab hoc saeculo imperative quidem est religionis, elicitive autem temperantiae vel alicuius huiusmodi virtutis”.

³⁰ ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντοι φίλον ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν [*EN* 1.6.1096a16-17].

³¹ “[C]um autem amicitiam habeamus ad ambo, scilicet ad veritatem et ad hominem, magis debemus veritatem amare quam hominem, quia hominem praecipue debemus amare propter veritatem et propter virtutem, ut in VIII huius dicitur. Veritas autem est amicus superexcellens cui debetur reverentia honoris; est etiam veritas quiddam divinum, in Deo enim primo et principaliter invenitur...” [*in EN* 1.6.4, ll.55-65 (§77)].

Rhodes, who saw a link between sanctity and progress in theory: “For Andronicus the Peripatetic says that sanctity is that which makes men faithful and observant of justice towards God”.³² Finally, Thomas cites Plato himself, to the effect that truth is a friend.³³ All of this can be read as establishing a connection between theory and worship by way of friendship and justice – and quite independently of the grace of Christ.

Thomas’s most positive expression of regard for the Aristotelian virtue of religion is probably to be found, however, in *ST* 1–2.61.5. In order to understand that article, it is useful to bear in mind what he says in *ST* 1–2.65.1 & 2 about the possible unity of the merely human (acquired) virtues. Thomas says in *ST* 1–2.65.1 that, in a life that is well-ordered but not touched by sanctifying grace, the acquired moral virtues are held together by the interplay of these virtue themselves and acquired prudence (*φρόνησις*). This interplay entails that one cannot have the moral virtues without prudence but also that one cannot be prudent without the moral virtues (all of them). The ends sought by the well-ordered person are the correct ones because of his acquired moral virtues; on the other hand, prudence “counsels, judges and issues commands” regarding the things (the acts) that lead to these ends and so, as is appropriate to an intellectual virtue, plays the leading role in the process of unification.³⁴

³² See above, note 2.

³³ “Dicit enim Andronicus Peripateticus, quod sanctitas est quae facit fideles et servantes ea quae ad Deum iusta. Haec etiam fuit sententia Platonis, qui reprobans opinionem Socratis magistri sui dixit quod oportet de veritate magis curare quam de aliquo alio; et alibi dicit: amicus quidem Socrates sed magis amica veritas; et in alio loco: de Socrate quidem parum est curandum, de veritate autem multum” [in *EN* 1.6.5, ll.67–75 (§78)].

³⁴ “...nulla virtus moralis potest sine prudentia haberi, eo quod proprium virtutis moralis est facere electionem rectam, cum sit habitus electivus; ad rectam autem electionem non solum sufficit inclinatio in debitum finem, quod est directe per habitum virtutis moralis; sed etiam quod aliquis directe eligat ea quae sunt ad finem, quod fit per prudentiam, quae est consiliativa et iudicativa et praeceptiva eorum quae sunt ad finem. Similiter etiam prudentia non potest haberi nisi habeantur virtutes morales, cum prudentia sit recta ratio agibilium, quae, sicut ex principiis, procedit ex finibus agibilium, ad quos aliquis recte se habet per virtutes morales” [*ST* 1–2.65.1c]. In this corpus, Thomas gives two possible ways of dealing with the issue raised in the article (whether the moral virtues are connected with one another). With respect to the first, he cites Gregory the Great and Augustine; the second is the Aristotelian understanding of the relationship between the moral virtues and prudence. In the corpus, he does not say whether one of the approaches is preferable; but in ad 3 and 4 he makes use of the second (Aristotelian) way.

Acquired prudence does not, however, manage to unify the soul in the way that infused prudence does, which can only be present when charity is also present (by sanctifying grace). In *ST* 1-2.65.2, Thomas describes the difference between acquired and infused prudence (which represents the “right *ratio* of prudence”):

For the right *ratio* of prudence, however, much more required is that a man be well disposed with respect to the ultimate end [finem] (which comes about by charity) than with respect to other ends [alios fines] (which comes about [fit] by the moral virtues) – just as right *ratio* in speculative matters maximally require the *first* indemonstrable principle that contradictories cannot be true together.³⁵

What we have then in *ST* 1-2.65.1 & 2 is, in effect, a schema wherein merely human (and acquired) virtue is distinguished from the virtue that is available through grace. In the former a certain degree of unity is present in so far as the moral virtues with their individual ends are held together by human prudence; in the latter, prudence in the fullest sense disposes a man with respect to the ultimate end *directly* and not by way of the ends of the various acquired moral virtues.³⁶

Thomas’s highest and most positive regard for Aristotelian virtue – including the virtue of religion – is not to be found in what he says in *ST* 1-2.65.1 (about the way in which even the acquired virtues can be unified by acquired prudence) but in the article already mentioned, *ST* 1-2.61.5. In that article he recognizes another virtuous state between the two identified in *ST* 1-2.65.1 and *ST* 1-2.65.2 respectively. The Aristotelian char-

³⁵ “Ad rectam autem rationem prudentiae multo magis requiritur quod homo bene se habeat circa ultimum finem, quod fit per caritatem, quam circa alios fines, quod fit per virtutes morales, sicut ratio recta in speculativis maxime indiget primo principio indemonstrabili, quod est contradictoria non simul esse vera” [*ST* 1-2.65.2c]. It is noteworthy that here Thomas speaks (by way of simile) of a indemonstrable principle but in *ST* 1-2.65.1c he speaks (in a parallel simile) of plural principles (“Unde sicut scientia speculativa non potest haberi sine intellectu principiorum, ita nec prudentia sine virtutibus moralibus”). On the “connectedness” of the various types of virtue, see Thomas M. (Jr.) Osborne, “Perfect and imperfect virtues in Aquinas”, *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 39-64 but also David Decosimo, *Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and pagan virtue* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 93.

³⁶ “...solae virtutes infusae sunt perfectae, et simpliciter dicendae virtutes, quia bene ordinant hominem ad finem ultimum simpliciter. Aliae vero virtutes, scilicet acquisitae, sunt secundum quid virtutes, non autem simpliciter, ordinant enim hominem bene respectu finis ultimi in aliquo genere, non autem respectu finis ultimi simpliciter” [*ST* 1-2.65.2c].

acter of this middle – or what, as we shall see, might better be called this “proleptic” – state is obscured by the neoplatonic language in which Thomas presents the state; but, as with the virtue of religion (identified as a potential part of justice), its basically Aristotelian character is demonstrable.

In *ST* 1-2.61.5, Thomas asks whether the way Macrobius divides the cardinal virtues – into the exemplar virtues, the virtues of the purified soul, the political virtues, and the purificatory virtues – is at all acceptable.³⁷ What are these categories of virtue? The exemplar virtues are the cardinal virtues as “pre-existing” in God himself. They would be his divine mind (prudence), his turning himself toward himself (temperance), his immutability (fortitude), and his adherence in his acts to the divine law (justice). The virtues of the purified soul are the cardinal virtues as existing in those who are “already achieving divine likeness”.³⁸ (The “purified souls” include both the blessed and certain “most perfect” individuals still in this life.) And the political virtues are the standard Aristotelian moral virtues (plus prudence), adapted, however, to the fourfold division of the cardinal virtues. Thomas emphasizes that these virtues pertain to *human* nature; he also says here that, “up until now”, he has been speaking about these, the political virtues.³⁹

That leaves the purificatory virtues, occupying a “middle region” between the political virtues and the virtues of the purified soul, although (to be more precise) they have pulled away from the former and are heading toward the latter. Prudence within this category despises the contempla-

³⁷ “Sed contra est quod Macrobius ibidem dicit, Plotinus, inter philosophiae professores cum Platone princeps, quatuor sunt, inquit, quaternarum genera virtutum. Ex his primae politicae vocantur; secundae, purgatoriae; tertiae autem, iam purgati animi; quartae, exemplares” [*ST* 1-2.61.5]. Thomas is referring to Macrobius’s commentary on Cicero’s “Dream of Scipio” [Jacobus Willis, ed., *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (Lipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1970), 1.8.5]. Macrobius claims to be following Plotinus. On the complex historical development of the cardinal virtues, see Houser, *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert and Philip the Chancellor*, passim.

³⁸ The phrase translated here is “virtutes iam assequentium divinam similitudinem”. On the translation of the word *assequentium*, see below.

³⁹ “Et quia homo secundum suam naturam est animal politicum, virtutes huiusmodi, prout in homine existunt secundum conditionem suae naturae, politicae vocantur, prout scilicet homo secundum has virtutes recte se habet in rebus humanis gerendis. Secundum quem modum hactenus de his virtutibus locuti sumus” [*ST* 1-2.61.5c]. In the twelve questions prior to this one (questions 49-60), he has been discussing habits and virtues (both moral and intellectual); in the immediately subsequent article (*ST* 1-2.62), he introduces the theological virtues.

tion of worldly things so that it might contemplate divine things; temperance has to do with the needs of the body, which it seeks to minimize; courage allows the soul to overcome fear of both departure from the body and the approach to higher things; and justice allows the whole soul to consent to the way proposed.⁴⁰

All of these virtues could belong to a person also possessed of divine charity; indeed, soon after introducing the group that includes both the purificatory virtues and those of the purified soul, Thomas quotes Matthew 5:48: “You, therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”. But immediately before citing revelation, he cites Aristotle. Writes Thomas: “...it pertains to man also to draw himself up to divine things as much as possible, as also the Philosopher says in book ten of the *Nicomachean Ethics*”.⁴¹

Thomas is making reference to the following remarks, which we have already encountered (at least in part):

If intellect is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it [the intellect] be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything [EN 10.7.1177b30-1178a2].

⁴⁰ “Ita scilicet quod prudentia omnia mundana divinorum contemplatione despiciat, omnemque animae cogitationem in divina sola dirigat; temperantia vero relinquat, in quantum natura patitur, quae corporis usus requirit; fortitudinis autem est ut anima non terreatur propter excessum a corpore, et accessum ad superna; iustitia vero est ut tota anima consentiat ad huius propositi viam” [ST 1-2.61.5c]. In introducing this category, Thomas says that “there are certain virtues of those moving forward and tending toward divine similitude” [“quaedam sunt virtutes transeuntium et in divinam similitudinem tendentium”]. This same “tending toward” aspect is also apparent in Macrobius: “Secundae, quas purgatorias uocant, hominis sunt, qui diuini capax est; solumque animum eius expediunt, qui decreuit se a corporis contagione purgare, et quadam humanorum fuga solis se inserere diuinis” [Willis, *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, 1.8.8].

⁴¹ “Sed quia ad hominem pertinet ut etiam ad divina se trahat quantum potest, ut etiam philosophus dicit, in X Ethic.; et hoc nobis in sacra Scriptura multipliciter commendatur, ut est illud Matth.V, estote perfecti, sicut et pater vester caelestis perfectus est, necesse est ponere quasdam virtutes medias inter politicas, quae sunt virtutes humanae, et exemplares, quae sunt virtutes divinae” [ST 1-2.61.5c]. He then goes on to distinguish within these “virtutes medias inter politicas ... et exemplares” the purificatory virtues and the virtues of the purified soul.

These virtues, which Aristotle elsewhere calls “heroic and divine” [*EN* 7.1.1145a19–20], are even higher than the strictly speaking Aristotelian virtues. Doubtless, Thomas would be willing to attach a virtue of religion to “purificatory” justice as a potential part of it. Were we to encounter an actual expression of this virtue, it would be hard to distinguish it from the virtue of religion in its highest – that is, in its infused – form.

III. The imperfection of Aristotelian religion

For all their “divinity”, however, and their beyond-the-human excellence, these heroic virtues are still imperfect. One sees this once one considers what man is capable of, having once arrived at the level of the virtue of the purified soul or – as Thomas clearly has in mind when speaking in *ST* 1–2.61.5 of the virtues of the purified soul – having once been granted the theological virtues and especially charity. In introducing there the purificatory virtues and the virtues of the purified soul, he says that they are distinguished, “according to a diversity of movement and terminus”.

Thomas’s speaking of these two categories of virtues in this manner has to do with the ways in which the four cardinal virtues (within their distinct categories) are to be distinguished. But the remark also has to do with the difference between the infused and the acquired virtues. Recall what he says in *ST* 1–2.65.2:

It is clear ... that the infused virtues are perfect and ought to be called virtues simpliciter, for they dispose a man to the ultimate end. But the other virtues, that is, the acquired ones, are virtues in a restricted sense and not simpliciter, for they order a man well with respect to the ultimate end *in some genus*, not however with respect to the ultimate end simpliciter.

Thomas is in effect saying here that, although the purificatory virtues are above the merely human political virtues, they still display – and in a particularly clear-cut way – the “extended structure” characteristic of acts which, with their proper objects, serve as a means to intelligibly distinct ends (or to a single end). This is consistent with what he says in *ST* 1–2.61.5 immediately after speaking of the “diversity of movement and terminus” of both the purificatory virtues and the virtues of the purified soul. He says: “thus it is that there are certain virtues of those *moving forward and tending toward* divine similitude – and these are called purificatory virtues”.⁴²

⁴² “Quae quidem virtutes distinguuntur secundum diversitatem motus et termini. Ita scilicet quod quaedam sunt virtutes transeuntium et in divinam similitudinem ten-

In *ST* 1-2.61.5, Thomas understands each of the purificatory virtues in terms of its proper characteristics. Prudence despises the contemplation of worldly things in the interest of divine contemplation; temperance neglects bodily needs, directing the soul towards the divine, etc. Although these virtues may all be coordinated with each other (through, presumably, the commanding influence of prudence), the resulting humanly virtuous soul is not yet unified to the degree effected by charity. In other words, the souls yet undergoing purification have not yet “touched” God. Thomas describes the cardinal virtues of the purified soul quite differently. Prudence in this category, he says, “gazes at nothing but divine things; temperance knows no earthly desires; fortitude knows nothing of the passions; and justice is united with the divine mind by a eternal covenant, that is, by imitating it”.⁴³ The means-end articulation has here quite nearly disappeared. It has become difficult to distinguish one virtue from the other: in a sense, they are all just part of one and the same gazing at the divine.

It was mentioned briefly above that, in first speaking of the virtues of the purified soul, Thomas says that they are had by the souls “of those already achieving divine likeness”. The Latin for the latter phrase runs as follows: “iam assequentium divinam similitudinem”. The word *assequentium* (from *assequi*) is sometimes difficult to translate into English, for it can refer either to those who are following something or to those who have reached that something *by* following. Here in *ST* 1-2.61.5c, however, the word *iam* (‘already’) pushes the translation decidedly towards the “achieving” rather than the “pursuing” sense. With that sense in mind, one cannot avoid making the connection with the word *attingere* (‘to attain’ or ‘to touch’) encountered above while examining *ST* 2-2.2.2 ad 3, where Thomas associates the theological virtue of faith (as distinct from the virtue of religion) with what Aristotle says in *Metaph.* 9.10 about simply recognizing that one stands before an instantiated essence – what he says, that is, about “touching” the essence rather than reasoning about it.⁴⁴ The way in which the vir-

dentium, et hae vocantur virtutes purgatoriae” [*ST* 1-2.61.5c]. See above, note 40.

⁴³ “Ita scilicet quod prudentia sola divina intueatur; temperantia terrenas cupiditates nesciat; fortitudo passiones ignoret; iustitia cum divina mente perpetuo foedere societur, eam scilicet imitando” [*ST* 1-2.61.5c]. Macrobius describes prudence in this category as “not preferring divine things as by a choice but knowing them alone and, as if no other thing exists, gazing at them” [“Illic prudentiae est, diuina non quasi in electione praeferre, sed sola nosse, et haec, tanquam nihil sit aliud, intueri”]: Willis, *Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, 1.8.9].

⁴⁴ See above, at note 18.

tues of the purified soul differ from the purificatory virtues seems related to this. In some sense – a sense at least approaching Aristotle’s “touching” – the purified soul, even in its religious practice, reaches the divine.

A help in understanding what this might mean – and what the structure of such activity might be – is found in Cajetan’s (Thomas de Vio’s) commentary upon *ST* 2–2.81.5, the article in which Thomas ask whether religion is a theological virtue and argues that it is not. Writes Thomas:

Two things are to be considered in religion. One is that which religion offers to God, that is to say, worship, and this serves for religion as matter and object. The other, however, is that to which [cui] worship is offered, that is to say, God. The acts by which God is worshiped *as such* do not touch that to which [cui] worship is offered, as, when we believe God, in believing, we touch God. For this reason it was stated above [*ST* 2–2.2.2] that God is the object of faith not only in as much as we believe that God..., but in as much as we believe God.⁴⁵

In his commentary Cajetan considers the straightforward objection that, “when we offer worship to God, by the act of prayer, we touch [attingimus] God, just as in believing God... and believing God, by the act of faith, we touch [attingimus] God”.⁴⁶ The objection also alludes to the fact that, in *ST* 2–2.81.3, Thomas himself says that habits (such as virtues) are distinguished according to their objects and that the virtue of religion is distinguished in so far as it shows reverence to the one supreme God.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ “Duo igitur in religione considerantur. Unum quidem quod religio Deo affert, cultus scilicet, et hoc se habet per modum materiae et obiecti ad religionem. Aliud autem est id cui affertur, scilicet Deus. Cui cultus exhibetur, non quasi actus quibus Deus colitur, ipsum Deum attingunt, sicut cum credimus Deo, credendo Deum attingimus (propter quod supra dictum est quod Deus est fidei obiectum non solum in quantum credimus Deum, sed in quantum credimus Deo)” [*ST* 2–2.81.5]. On the translation of the phrases *credere Deo* and (‘to believe God’) *credere Deum* (‘to believe that God...’), see note 19 above.

⁴⁶ “...cultum Deo afferendo, Deum orationis actu attingimus, sicut credendo Deum et Deo, fidei actu attingimus Deum” [Thomas Aquinas and Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *Summa Theologiae, cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum*, in *Opera Omnia, vv. 4–12, Commissio Leonina* (Rome: Ex typographia polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 1888–1906), v. 9 182a].

⁴⁷ In *ST* 2–2.81.4 ad 3, Thomas also says that God, as honored, is the object of religion. In his commentary on this, Cajetan says: “In responsione ad tertium eiusdem articuli, adverte quod Auctor iterum asserit excellentiam divinae bonitatis esse obiectum religionis, ac per hoc Deum esse obiectum religionis” [Thomas Aquinas and Thomas de

Cajetan's solution to this issue is to say that the infused virtue of religion "participates in the nature of the theological virtues".

[R]eligion, because it is a moral virtue, in its acts does not touch God as object or matter with respect to which it operates; but [it does so] with respect to the human mind, the human works, and the exterior things which it offers to God by praying, adoring, sacrificing, and offering. Because, however, religion participates in the theological virtues, it has God as its object not simpliciter but as that to which [cui] fitting worship is offered.⁴⁸

This particular sense in which God is the object of religion ("not simpliciter but as that to which the fitting worship is offered") depends upon the presence of divine charity in the soul of the one who worships. In *ST* 2-2.83.1 ad 2, Thomas says that the will moves the reason towards the end of charity, which is to be united with God. In his commentary on this passage, Cajetan alludes to what he has said in his commentary on *ST* 2-2.81.5:

Note first of all that you see here what we said above, in commenting upon *ST* 2-2.81.5, regarding religion according to itself [secundum se] or (alternatively) as commanded by another virtue. That is, you see that, when religion is commanded by charity, it terminates, as at its object, with God, but not as it is according to itself [secundum se]. For indeed you see that it is by the command of charity that prayer is classified as asking for God.⁴⁹

Vio (Cajetan), *Summa Theologiae, cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum*, v. 9 181b].

⁴⁸ "...in virtutibus moralibus, suprema earum, quae est religio, participat naturam theologialium virtutum. Propter quod religio, quia moralis est, actibus suis non attingit Deum ut obiectum seu materiam circa quam operatur, sed circa humanam mentem, humana opera, resque exteriores, quas offert Deo orando, adorando, sacrificando, offerendo: quia vero theologales participat, Deum habet pro obiecto non simpliciter, sed cui debitum cultum affert" [Thomas Aquinas and Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *Summa Theologiae, cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum*, v. 9 182a].

⁴⁹ "In responsione ad secundum eiusdem articuli, nota primo, quod hinc habes quod supra diximus in [*ST* 2-2.81.5] de religione secundum se, vel imperata ab alia virtute: et quod imperata a caritate ad Deum terminatur ut obiectum, non secundum se. Habes namque quod petere Deum sortitur oratio ex caritatis imperio" [Thomas Aquinas and Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *Summa Theologiae, cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum*, v. 9 193b]. Cajetan says a similar thing in his commentary on *ST* 2-2.81.5. He says, for instance, that acts of religion can be considered "as if dressed by some other virtue" ["quasi vestiti ab aliqua alia virtute"]. A few lines later he says that,

The presence of charity changes everything. As we have seen, in a wholly virtuous person who does not, however, have charity, that which is pursued is not that which (in the strict sense) is pursued by the virtue that issues commands with respect to the moral virtues. The ends pursued by such a person are the ends of the moral virtues themselves, not of prudence, which simply chooses the means and so succeeds in holding things together. The result is a *certain* degree of unity (or “connectedness”) in the soul, although the various moral virtues retain their particular structures: their “diversity of movement and terminus”. The acquired virtues, says Thomas, “are virtues in a restricted sense and not simpliciter, for they order a man well with respect to the ultimate end in some genus, not however with respect to the ultimate end simpliciter” [ST 1-2.65.2]. But when charity is present the single ultimate end, union with God, is present in the very soul of the person so blessed. The objects of his acts of religion are still, strictly speaking, those acts themselves, whether they are external or internal acts. But, as Cajetan says, God *is* the object of the infused virtue of religion in as much as he is that to which [*cui*] worship is directed.

This is just another way of saying that in charity we become friends of God – that which was excluded by Aristotle, even while he acknowledged that a certain type of friendship was possible between God and man, that is, “friendship according to preeminence” [EE 7.4.1239a1-4]. With charity, however, we are capable of “friendship according to equality” [EE 7.4.1239a1-4] even with God, in so far as we are one with his Son. Says Thomas:

Charity is not of man in as much as he is man but in as much as, through the participation of grace, he becomes God [*fit Deus*] and a son of God, in accordance with the first letter of St. John [3.1]: “See what love [*caritatem*] the Father has given to us: that we should be called sons of God and be so”.⁵⁰

“in as much as sometimes acts of religion touch God, they are classified with respect to this unconnected thing” [“Pro quanto vero quandoque actus religionis ad Deum attingunt, ex alieno hoc sortiuntur”][Thomas Aquinas and Thomas de Vio (Cajetan), *Summa Theologiae, cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum*, v. 9 182b]. (The unconnected thing is the command of the distinct virtue: charity.)

⁵⁰ “Ad decimumquintum dicendum, quod caritas non est virtus hominis in quantum est homo, sed in quantum per participationem gratiae fit Deus et filius Dei, secundum illud I Ioan. III, 1: ‘videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater, ut filii Dei nominemur et simus’” [Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata de caritate*, in *Quaestiones disputatae*, v. 2 (*editio IX revisa*), ed. P. Bazzi, et al. (Turin/Rome: Marietti, 1953), q. un., 2 ad 15]. See

As we have seen, strictly speaking, we cannot be friends with ourselves since friendship, as a part of justice, is always with another: we can only be friends with someone who serves as an object of our love, and an object is distinct from ourselves. But the proper object of friendship is also one we can come face to face with and *touch*. This means that, when God is honored only as that which ultimately and remotely makes sense of our virtuous inclinations, we cannot be friends with him. He remains in the realm of friendship according to preeminence. But if and when charity is infused, God puts himself on an equal plane with us so that we can touch him in our worship, as the object *to* which worship is offered and who, as intimate friend, brings order and tranquillity to our souls.⁵¹

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also *ST* 1-2.109.3 ad 1 ("quandam societatem spiritualem cum Deo"); q. 110 a. 1 ("Alia autem dilectio [Dei ad creaturam] est specialis, secundum quam trahit creaturam rationalem supra conditionem naturae, ad participationem divini boni. Et secundum hanc dilectionem dicitur aliquem diligere simpliciter, quia secundum hanc dilectionem vult Deus simpliciter creaturae bonum aeternum, quod est ipse"). See also *ST* 1-2.110.3; 112.1; 2-2.23.1; 24.2.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Fr. Stephen Brock for sharing his knowledge and offering good counsel regarding a number of aspects of this essay.

- ae, Qq. 58-122)". In *The Ethics of Aquinas*, edited by Stephen J. Pope, 272-86. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002.
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