

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

[Index](#) [[<<](#) [⬮](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 134](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

OF MAGNIFICENCE (FOUR ARTICLES)

We must now consider magnificence and the vices opposed to it. With regard to magnificence there are four points of inquiry:

[\(1\)](#) Whether magnificence is a virtue?

[\(2\)](#) Whether it is a special virtue?

[\(3\)](#) What is its matter?

[\(4\)](#) Whether it is a part of fortitude?

[Index](#) [[<<](#) [⬮](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 134](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Article: 1](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether magnificence is a virtue?

Objection 1: It seems that magnificence is not a virtue. For whoever has one virtue has all the virtues, as stated above ([FS](#), [Question \[65\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). But one may have the other virtues without having magnificence: because the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 2) that "not every liberal man is magnificent." Therefore magnificence is not a virtue.

Objection 2: Further, moral virtue observes the mean, according to Ethic. ii, 6. But magnificence does not seemingly observe the mean, for it exceeds liberality in greatness. Now "great" and "little" are opposed to one another as extremes, the mean of which is "equal," as stated in Metaph. x. Hence magnificence observes not the mean, but the extreme. Therefore it is not a virtue.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS134.html](#)lects it, as stated above ([Question \[108\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#); [Question \[117\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#), Objection [1]). Now according to the Philosopher (Ethic. iv, 2) the "magnificent man is not lavish towards himself": and this is opposed to the natural inclination one has to look after oneself. Therefore magnificence is not a virtue.

Objection 4: Further, according to the Philosopher (Ethic. vi, 4) "act is right reason about things to be made." Now magnificence is about things to be made, as its very name denotes [*Magnificence= magna facere---i.e. to make great things]. Therefore it is an act rather than a virtue.

On the contrary, Human virtue is a participation of Divine power. But magnificence [virtutis] belongs to Divine power, according to Ps. 47:35: "His magnificence and His power is in the clouds." Therefore magnificence is a virtue.

I answer that, According to De Coelo i, 16, "we speak of virtue in relation to the extreme limit of a thing's power," not as regards the limit of deficiency, but as regards the limit of excess, the very nature of which denotes something great. Wherefore to do something great, whence magnificence takes its name, belongs properly to the very notion of virtue. Hence magnificence denotes a virtue.

Reply to Objection 1: Not every liberal man is magnificent as regards his actions, because he lacks the wherewithal to perform magnificent deeds. Nevertheless every liberal man has the habit of magnificence, either actually or in respect of a proximate disposition thereto, as explained above ([Question \[129\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#), ad 2), as also ([FS, Question \[65\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)) when we were treating of the connection of virtues.

Reply to Objection 2: It is true that magnificence observes the extreme, if we consider the quantity of the thing done: yet it observes the mean, if we consider the rule of reason, which it neither falls short of nor exceeds, as we have also said of magnanimity ([Question \[129\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#), ad 1).

Reply to Objection 3: It belongs to magnificence to do something great. But that which regards a man's person is little in comparison with that which regards Divine things, or even the affairs of the community at large. Wherefore the magnificent man does not intend principally to be lavish towards himself, not that he does not seek his own good, but because to do so is not something great. Yet if anything regarding himself admits of greatness, the magnificent man accomplishes it magnificently: for instance, things that are done once, such as a wedding, or the like; or things that are of a lasting nature; thus it belongs to a magnificent man to provide himself with a suitable dwelling, as stated in Ethic. iv.

Reply to Objection 4: As the Philosopher says (Ethic. vi, 5) "there must needs be a virtue of act," i.e. a moral virtue, whereby the appetite is inclined to make good use of the rule of act: and this is what magnificence does. Hence it is not an act but a virtue.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 134](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 2 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Objection 1: It seems that magnificence is not a special virtue. For magnificence would seem to consist in doing something great. But it may belong to any virtue to do something great, if the virtue be great: as in the case of one who has a great virtue of temperance, for he does a great work of temperance. Therefore, magnificence is not a special virtue, but denotes a perfect degree of any virtue.

Objection 2: Further, seemingly that which tends to a thing is the same as that which does it. But it belongs to magnanimity to tend to something great, as stated above ([Question \[129\]](#), [Articles \[1\]](#),2). Therefore it belongs to magnanimity likewise to do something great. Therefore magnificence is not a special virtue distinct from magnanimity.

Objection 3: Further, magnificence seems to belong to holiness, for it is written ([Ex. 15:11](#)): "Magnificent [Douay: 'glorious'] in holiness," and ([Ps. 95:6](#)): "Holiness and magnificence [Douay: 'Majesty'] in His sanctuary." Now holiness is the same as religion, as stated above ([Question \[81\]](#), [Article \[8\]](#)). Therefore magnificence is apparently the same as religion. Therefore it is not a special virtue, distinct from the others.

On the contrary, The Philosopher reckons it with other special virtues (Ethic. ii, 7; iv 2).

I answer that, It belongs to magnificence to do [facere] something great, as its name implies [magnificence= magna facere---i.e. to make great things]. Now "facere" may be taken in two ways, in a strict sense, and in a broad sense. Strictly "facere" means to work something in external matter, for instance to make a house, or something of the kind; in a broad sense "facere" is employed to denote any action, whether it passes into external matter, as to burn or cut, or remain in the agent, as to understand or will.

Accordingly if magnificence be taken to denote the doing of something great, the doing [factio] being understood in the strict sense, it is then a special virtue. For the work done is produced by act: in the use of which it is possible to consider a special aspect of goodness, namely that the work produced [factum] by the act is something great, namely in quantity, value, or dignity, and this is what magnificence does. In this way magnificence is a special virtue.

If, on the other hand, magnificence take its name from doing something great, the doing [facere] being understood in a broad sense, it is not a special virtue.

Reply to Objection 1: It belongs to every perfect virtue to do something great in the genus of that virtue, if "doing" [facere] be taken in the broad sense, but not if it be taken strictly, for this is proper to magnificence.

Reply to Objection 2: It belongs to magnanimity not only to tend to something great, but also to do great works in all the virtues, either by making [faciendo], or by any kind of action, as stated in Ethic. iv, 3: yet so that magnanimity, in this respect, regards the sole aspect of great, while the other virtues which, if they be perfect, do something great, direct their principal intention, not to something great, but to that which is proper to each virtue: and the greatness of the thing done is sometimes consequent upon the greatness of the virtue.

On the other hand, it belongs to magnificence not only to do something great, "doing" [facere] being taken in the strict sense, but also to tend with the mind to the doing of great things. Hence Tully says (De Invent. Rhet. ii) that "magnificence is the discussing and administering of

referring to the inward intention, and "administration" to the outward accomplishment. Wherefore just as magnanimity intends something great in every matter, it follows that magnificence does the same in every work that can be produced in external matter [factibili].

Reply to Objection 3: The intention of magnificence is the production of a great work. Now works done by men are directed to an end: and no end of human works is so great as the honor of God: wherefore magnificence does a great work especially in reference to the Divine honor. Wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 2) that "the most commendable expenditure is that which is directed to Divine sacrifices": and this is the chief object of magnificence. For this reason magnificence is connected with holiness, since its chief effect is directed to religion or holiness.

[Index](#) [[<<<](#) | [>>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 134](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Article: 3](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether the matter of magnificence is great expenditure?

Objection 1: It seems that the matter of magnificence is not great expenditure. For there are not two virtues about the same matter. But liberality is about expenditure, as stated above ([Question \[117\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)). Therefore magnificence is not about expenditure.

Objection 2: Further, "every magnificent man is liberal" (Ethic. iv, 2). But liberality is about gifts rather than about expenditure. Therefore magnificence also is not chiefly about expenditure, but about gifts.

Objection 3: Further, it belongs to magnificence to produce an external work. But not even great expenditure is always the means of producing an external work, for instance when one spends much in sending presents. Therefore expenditure is not the proper matter of magnificence.

Objection 4: Further, only the rich are capable of great expenditure. But the poor are able to possess all the virtues, since "the virtues do not necessarily require external fortune, but are sufficient for themselves," as Seneca says (De Ira i: De vita beata xvi). Therefore magnificence is not about great expenditure.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 2) that "magnificence does not extend, like liberality, to all transactions in money, but only to expensive ones, wherein it exceeds liberality in scale." Therefore it is only about great expenditure.

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[2\]](#)), it belongs to magnificence to intend doing some great work. Now for the doing of a great work, proportionate expenditure is necessary, for great works cannot be produced without great expenditure. Hence it belongs to magnificence to spend much in order that some great work may be accomplished in becoming manner. Wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 2) that "a magnificent man will produce a more magnificent work with equal," i.e. proportionate, "expenditure." Now expenditure is the outlay

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS134.html](#) too much. Hence the matter of magnificence may be said to be both this expenditure itself, which the magnificent man uses to produce a great work, and also the very money which he employs in going to great expense, and as well as the love of money, which love the magnificent man moderates, lest he be hindered from spending much.

Reply to Objection 1: As stated above ([Question \[129\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), those virtues that are about external things experience a certain difficulty arising from the genus itself of the thing about which the virtue is concerned, and another difficulty besides arising from the greatness of that same thing. Hence the need for two virtues, concerned about money and its use; namely, liberality, which regards the use of money in general, and magnificence, which regards that which is great in the use of money.

Reply to Objection 2: The use of money regards the liberal man in one way and the magnificent man in another. For it regards the liberal man, inasmuch as it proceeds from an ordinate affection in respect of money; wherefore all due use of money (such as gifts and expenditure), the obstacles to which are removed by a moderate love of money, belongs to liberality. But the use of money regards the magnificent man in relation to some great work which has to be produced, and this use is impossible without expenditure or outlay.

Reply to Objection 3: The magnificent man also makes gifts of presents, as stated in Ethic. iv, 2, but not under the aspect of gift, but rather under the aspect of expenditure directed to the production of some work, for instance in order to honor someone, or in order to do something which will reflect honor on the whole state: as when he brings to effect what the whole state is striving for.

Reply to Objection 4: The chief act of virtue is the inward choice, and a virtue may have this without outward fortune: so that even a poor man may be magnificent. But goods of fortune are requisite as instruments to the external acts of virtue: and in this way a poor man cannot accomplish the outward act of magnificence in things that are great simply. Perhaps, however, he may be able to do so in things that are great by comparison to some particular work; which, though little in itself, can nevertheless be done magnificently in proportion to its genus: for little and great are relative terms, as the Philosopher says (De Praedic. Cap. Ad aliquid.).

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 134](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 4 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether magnificence is a part of fortitude?

Objection 1: It seems that magnificence is not a part of fortitude. For magnificence agrees in matter with liberality, as stated above ([Article \[3\]](#)). But liberality is a part, not of fortitude, but of justice. Therefore magnificence is not a part of fortitude.

Objection 2: Further, fortitude is about fear and darings. But magnificence seems to have nothing to do with fear, but only with expenditure, which is a kind of action. Therefore magnificence seems to pertain to justice, which is about actions, rather than to fortitude.

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS134.html](#).
man of science." Now science has more in common with prudence than with fortitude.
Therefore magnificence should not be reckoned a part of fortitude.

On the contrary, Tully (De Invent. Rhet. ii) and Macrobius (De Somn. Scip. i) and Andronicus reckon magnificence to be a part of fortitude.

I answer that, Magnificence, in so far as it is a special virtue, cannot be reckoned a subjective part of fortitude, since it does not agree with this virtue in the point of matter: but it is reckoned a part thereof, as being annexed to it as secondary to principal virtue.

In order for a virtue to be annexed to a principal virtue, two things are necessary, as stated above ([Question \[80\]](#)). The one is that the secondary virtue agree with the principal, and the other is that in some respect it be exceeded thereby. Now magnificence agrees with fortitude in the point that as fortitude tends to something arduous and difficult, so also does magnificence: wherefore seemingly it is seated, like fortitude, in the irascible. Yet magnificence falls short of fortitude, in that the arduous thing to which fortitude tends derives its difficulty from a danger that threatens the person, whereas the arduous thing to which magnificence tends, derives its difficulty from the dispossession of one's property, which is of much less account than danger to one's person. Wherefore magnificence is accounted a part of fortitude.

Reply to Objection 1: Justice regards operations in themselves, as viewed under the aspect of something due: but liberality and magnificence regard sumptuary operations as related to the passions of the soul, albeit in different ways. For liberality regards expenditure in reference to the love and desire of money, which are passions of the concupiscible faculty, and do not hinder the liberal man from giving and spending: so that this virtue is in the concupiscible. On the other hand, magnificence regards expenditure in reference to hope, by attaining to the difficulty, not simply, as magnanimity does, but in a determinate matter, namely expenditure: wherefore magnificence, like magnanimity, is apparently in the irascible part.

Reply to Objection 2: Although magnificence does not agree with fortitude in matter, it agrees with it as the condition of its matter: since it tends to something difficult in the matter of expenditure, even as fortitude tends to something difficult in the matter of fear.

Reply to Objection 3: Magnificence directs the use of art to something great, as stated above and in the preceding Article. Now art is in the reason. Wherefore it belongs to the magnificent man to use his reason by observing proportion of expenditure to the work he has in hand. This is especially necessary on account of the greatness of both those things, since if he did not take careful thought, he would incur the risk of a great loss.