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Paweł Tarasiewicz
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
Poland

THE SERVIENT CHARACTER OF POLITICAL POWER ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Service seems to differ from political power merely by the very political character of the latter. For a more obvious example of service seems to be the responsibilities of a doctor, firefighter or soldier than those of a member of the Diet, prime minister or president.[1] Does this mean that political power does not have anything to do with service? Should we not expect actions that truly serve others from those executing political power?

Political power, though inherently related to political authority, maintains its distinctness from the latter. On the one hand, there is a social difference between power and authority. For while authority derives from the recognition of the right of some individual, group, or institution to exercise power, power denotes the ability of that individual, group, or institution to control, coerce, or regulate others. Those who hold power can also enjoy having authority, if they are recognized as legitimate power holders by those over whom their power is exercised. The coincidence of power and authority, however, seems to minimize the significance of power and testify in the favor of authority, because if "[t]here is an element of trust, faith, and recognition on the part of those following authority that the per-

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[1] Cf. Tobi Walker, "The Service/Politics Split: Rethinking Service to Teach Political Engagement," *Political Science and Politics* 33:3 (2000): 647.

son exercising it possesses some quality (for example, wisdom, expertise, or the fact that the person was elected by the people) that ought to be deferred to . . . then authority, rather than simple power, exists and must be followed, adhered to, and, within limits, obeyed." On the other hand, there is a lawful difference between power and authority that can be evidenced by an ancient Latin distinction, according to which, while the *ius* is the object of the *auctoritas* (authority), the *lex* is the fruit of the *potestas* (power).[2]

This paper attempts to explain the thesis of the servient character of political power. The first part of our considerations will be focused on the tasks of power, while the second—on those who wield this power. The basic material comprising the subject of this analysis will include selected political writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, namely his treatise *De regno ad regem Cypri* and his commentary *Sententia libri Politicorum*.[3] This selection of references is made due to philosophical reasons.[4] For the metaphysical way of treating the issue of political power by Aquinas makes his works enduringly pertinent, and therefore still valid.[5]

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[2] Gregory W. Streich, "Authority," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. I, ed. Maryanne C. Horowitz (Detroit et al.: Thomson Gale, 2005), 181. See also María Alejandra Vanney, "Potestas, auctoritas y estado moderno. Apuntes sobre el pensamiento político de Álvaro d'Ors," *Cuaderno* 109 (Febrero de 2009): 32–41.

[3] Thomas Aquinas, *De regno ad regem Cypri (On Kingship to the King of Cyprus)*, trans. by Gerald B. Phelan, revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P. (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1949), re-edited and chapter numbers aligned with Latin by Joseph Kenny, O.P. [http://dhspriory.org/thomas/DeRegno.htm#1, accessed on 24.03.2014, further quoted as *De regno*], and Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum* [www.corpus thomisticum.org/cpo.html, accessed on 25.03.2014, further quoted as *Sententia*].

[4] On theological implications of the Thomistic understanding of political power as *servire non dominare*, see Adam Machowski, *Teologia polityczna sw. Tomasza z Akwinu* (*The Political Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*) (Torun: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2011), 225–248.

[5] On the timelessness of metaphysics, see Moses I. Finley, "Myth, Memory, and History," *History and Theory* 4 (1965, no. 3): 287: "Hesiod is foreshadowing the step from *mythos* to *logos*, and that step was not mediated by history. It bypassed history altogether. It moved from the timelessness of myth to the timelessness of metaphysics"; *Zapatrzenie. Rozmowy ze Stefanem Swiezawskim* (*Musings. Talks with Stefan Swiezawski*), ed. Anna Karon-Ostrowska, Jozef Majewski, Zbigniew Nosowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WIEZ, 2006), 108: "Just as the great mysticism is timeless and always valid—e.g. the letters of St. Benedict despite being centuries old, have lost nothing of their freshness and validity—the great metaphysics will always remain valid and timeless;" *Streszczenie rozpraw doktorskich, magisterskich i seminaryjnych* (*Summaries of Doctoral, Master's, and Seminar Dissertations*), ed. Mieczyslaw Gogacz (Poznan: Pallottinum, 1956), 11: "[T]he philosophy of Tho-

What does political power serve?

Political power, though subordinate in its performance to the provisions of the law of a given State,[6] can be used to achieve one of two objectives. It can be subordinate to the interests specified in the field of an ideological struggle between people or to the objectives stemming from the personal nature of man. In the first case, the indispensable measure to achieve the intentions of power appears to be the status of the electoral winner, which ensures him dominance at the political level.[7] In the second case, it is ultimately the search for philosophical knowledge, which guarantees a principled understanding of the full range of man's natural needs.[8]

What kind of life does human nature predispose us to? Individual or social? Man is by nature predisposed to living in a community. This is corroborated by the fact that, after being born, a child does not have anything that would facilitate her or his independent life and development. Therefore, it is something natural (necessary and right) that man, during the period of maturation, lives in a human society. This does not mean, however, that after reaching personal maturity, living in a society becomes less important. Indeed, it would appear that in the case of a mature man, single life outside a community is possible, and this possibility should be facilitated by his developed reason. Nevertheless, even if one man could "attain knowledge of the particular things necessary for human life by reasoning from natural principles," he would not be able to comprehend by reason everything that can benefit or harm him. He is therefore forced to live together with other people "so that each one may assist his fellows,

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mas Aquinas, though fully 13th century in its character, is timeless and lasting, as every genuine, however necessarily partial, truth."

[6] See *Sententia*, I, 1: "Civitas autem duplici regimine regitur: scilicet politico et regali . . . Politicum autem regimen est quando ille qui praeest habet potestatem coarctatam secundum aliquas leges civitatis". See also Mark C. Murphy, "Consent, Custom, and the Common Good in Aquinas's Account of Political Authority," *The Review of Politics* 59:2 (1997): 323–350.

[7] Por. Leslie I. Hill, "Power and Citizenship in a Democratic Society," *Political Science and Politics* 24:3 (1991): 495–496: "[T]he context of power is a competitive marketplace where self-interested individuals engage in an essentially adversarial relation. The winner—by virtue of dominating the process through skill or superior resources—asserts his (sic) view of the common good, making use of the resources of government."

[8] Por. Anton H. Chroust, "Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's *Philosopher King*," *Rheinisches Museum* 111 (1968): 17: "Aristotle said that it was not merely unnecessary for a king to be a philosopher, but even a distinct disadvantage. What a king should do was to listen to and take the advice of true philosophers."

and different men may be occupied in seeking, by their reason, to make different discoveries."[9]

Is there a form of social life that would be able to meet the needs of man? Unfortunately, there is no such social structure that would on its own fully ensure the personal development of man. Cooperation is needed, at least between the family, village, city and the entire country. A family which is self-sufficient for life "insofar as it pertains to the natural acts of nourishment and the begetting of offspring and other things of this kind" needs to be supported by a village "with regard to those things which belong to the trade of one guild," a city "which is the perfect community and exists with regard to all the necessities of life" and the whole country "because of the need for fighting together and mutual help against enemies."[10]

Does social life require power? No form of social life can do without power. Of course, if man were to live and develop on his own "he would require no other guide to his end. Each man would be a king unto himself, under God, the highest King, inasmuch as he would direct himself in his acts by the light of reason given him from on high."[11] However, man, by living outside a society, cannot fulfill himself as a person. On the other hand, by living as part of a group, he can devise plans and pursue his own good, which can often conflict with the plans and activities of other members of the community. With no power above them, people would certainly turn against one other and scatter.[12] Therefore, it becomes appar-

[9] *De regno*, I, 1 [6]: "Homo autem horum, quae sunt suae vitae necessaria, naturalem cognitionem habet solum in communi, quasi eo per rationem valente ex universalibus principiis ad cognitionem singulorum, quae necessaria sunt humanae vitae, pervenire. Non est autem possibile quod unus homo ad omnia huiusmodi per suam rationem pertingat. Est igitur necessarium homini quod in multitudine vivat, ut unus ab alio adiuvetur et diversi diversis inveniendis per rationem occupentur, puta, unus in medicina, alius in hoc, alius in alio." Cf. *Sententia*, III, 5: "[U]tilis est vita communis etiam propter ipsum vivere, dum unus in communitate vitae existentium alii subvenit ad sustentationem vitae et contra pericula mortis."

[10] *De regno*, I, 2 [14]: "Habetur siquidem aliqua vitae sufficientia in una familia domus unius, quantum scilicet ad naturales actus nutritionis, et prolis generandae, et aliorum huiusmodi; in uno autem vico, quantum ad ea quae ad unum artificium pertinent; in civitate vero, quae est perfecta communitas, quantum ad omnia necessaria vitae; sed adhuc magis in provincia una propter necessitatem compugnationis et mutui auxilii contra hostes."

[11] Id., I, 1 [4]: "[N]ullo alio dirigente indigeret ad finem, sed ipse sibi unusquisque esset rex sub Deo summo rege, in quantum per lumen rationis divinitus datum sibi, in suis actibus se ipsum dirigeret."

[12] Id., I, 1 [8]: "Multis enim existentibus hominibus et unoquoque id, quod est sibi congruum, providente, multitudo in diversa dispergeretur, nisi etiam esset aliquis de eo quod ad bonum multitudinis pertinet curam habens . . ."

ent that as man's nature demands life in society, so also social life demands power aimed at the common good of the entire community.

What is the common good of social life, and, at the same time, the ultimate goal of power? It is the most possibly fullest realization of the personal nature of man. If man's nature not only predisposed him to development, but also stimulated this development, generating, for example, needs, we should acknowledge that the goal of political power is nothing other than the fulfillment of human needs—just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau wanted.[13] In turn, if the nature of man, on the one hand, demanded development, and, on the other hand, was unable to explicitly point out the direction of its achievement, we should ascertain that the goal of political power is the creation of its own model of fulfilling it—as Karl Marx saw it.[14]

The personal nature of man, however, does not, on its own, stimulate his development through needs, as these are not always conducive to it, nor does it expect power to provide ideas on its fulfillment, because it, on its own, points at virtue as the correct direction of its dynamism.[15] The principal task of political power is thus neither the fulfillment of human needs, nor the establishment of the goal of social life, but rather the governance in the field of measures for the realization of the goal that is compatible with the nature of man. As the goal of human life peculiarly stems from the nature of man, so the objectives of human communities stem from their *natures*.[16] In other words, the ultimate goal of human society should be equated to the purpose of man—a life of virtue.[17]

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[13] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Umowa spoleczna" ("The Social Contract"), Polish trans. Antoni Peretiatkowicz, in *Antologia tekstow dotyczacych praw czlowieka* (*An Anthology of Writings on Human Rights*), ed. Jerzy Zajadlo (Warszawa: Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, 2008), 156.

[14] See Will Wilkinson, "Capitalism and Human Nature," *Cato Policy Report* 27:1 (2005): 1: "In the spring of 1845, Karl Marx wrote, *the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations*. Marx's idea was that a change in *the ensemble of social relations* can change *the human essence*."

[15] On virtue, see Zbigniew Panpuch, "Cnoty i wady" ("Virtues and Vices"), in *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii* (*The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*), vol. 2, ed. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, S.D.B. (Lublin: PTTA, 2001), 216–231.

[16] Artur Andrzejuk, "Wladza wedlug sw. Tomasza z Akwinu" ("Power According to St. Thomas Aquinas") [www.tomizm.pl/?q=node/27, accessed on 19.03.2014].

[17] *De regno*, I, 15 [106]: "It is, however, clear that the end of a multitude gathered together is to live virtuously."

What means lead to the achievement of the goal of power? The development of a virtuous life among citizens requires that political power achieve its specific tasks, among which the pursuit of social peace, activities promoting the good and providing an abundance of earthly possessions appear to be particularly important.[18] Any possible shortages in respect to these goods and measures would bring disharmony to social life and could seriously hinder their achievement. Therefore, it is the obligation of power to establish these measures on the basis of real social relationships, and where they already exist—to pursue their preservation and change for the better.[19]

Peace is a form of social unity[20] whose existence constitutes the foundation and guarantee of the many benefits of life in common.[21] One of the important benefits of such life is the moral development of its participants—free people.[22] No moral progress would be possible if not for the freedom of individual members of society. Hence, genuine care for peace is, at the same time, a guarantee of human freedom. It is freedom that makes the purpose of government the preservation of peace, being the common good of people composing a given community. Power that neglects its responsibility for keeping peace would be a contradiction in service for the benefit of the achievement of the personal nature of man. This is because disregard for human freedom could easily transform into treating free people as slaves.[23] Indeed, the specificity of power over free men

[18] Id., I, 16 [118]: "Sic igitur ad bonam vitam multitudinis instituendam tria requiruntur. Primo quidem, ut multitudo in unitate pacis constituatur. Secundo, ut multitudo vinculo pacis unita dirigatur ad bene agendum. Sicut enim homo nihil bene agere potest nisi praesupposita suarum partium unitate, ita hominum multitudo pacis unitate carens, dum impugnat se ipsam, impeditur a bene agendo. Tertio vero requiritur ut per regentis industriam necessariorum ad bene vivendum adsit sufficiens copia."

[19] Id., I, 16 [117]: "[Q]uod quidem studium in tria dividitur, ut primo quidem in subiecta multitudine bonam vitam instituat; secundo, ut institutam conservet; tertio, ut conservatam ad meliora promoveat."

[20] See id., 16 [118]: "[M]ultitudinis autem unitas, quae pax dicitur, per regentis industriam est procuranda."

[21] Cf. id., 3 [17]: "Bonum autem et salus consociatae multitudinis est ut eius unitas conservetur, quae dicitur pax, qua remota, socialis vitae perit utilitas, quinimmo multitudo dissentiens sibi ipsi sit onerosa."

[22] Cf. Linda C. Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government," *Humanitas* 16:2 (2003): 104.

[23] Andrzejuk, "Wladza wedlug sw. Tomasza z Akwinu:" "[N]owadays, treating a naturally free man as a slave consists in treating him as a thing, tool, object or an animal."

cannot consist in anything other than care for the benefit of all those subject to this authority.[24]

In turn, social activities for the sake of the good appear to be directly proportional to the level of virtue of a given society. Virtuous men, by performing and multiplying what is good, affirm their membership in a given group, since "only those who render mutual assistance to one another in living well form a genuine part of an assembled multitude."[25] Cooperation *in virtue* and *for virtue* lies at the heart of social prosperity: from the correct functioning of the family, to being successful in business and getting suitable rest.[26]

Friendship is an exceptionally valuable fruit of a virtuous life.[27] It is a natural counterweight to physical coercion, which almost by definition appears to accompany political power. The stronger the friendship binding a given society, the less needed is the use of means of coercion vested in the political power at the level of social life.[28] Of course, it is impossible for all members of a given society to be characterized by virtue and mutual friendship. Therefore, the existence of the means of physical coercion is necessary. We might ask, however, whether the restoration of virtue, in addition to the restoration of peace, can be the reason for using physical coercion. We should highlight that, if the restoration of virtue is to be a reason for resorting to forcible corrective measures, this probably does

[24] *Sententia*, III, 5: "[P]rincipatus qui est supra liberos ordinatur principaliter ad utilitatem subditorum." See also *De regno*, I, 2 [10]: "Si igitur liberorum multitudo a regente ad bonum commune multitudinis ordinetur, erit regimen rectum et iustum, quale convenit liberis."

[25] *De regno*, I, 15 [106], and further: "Si enim propter solum vivere homines convenirent, animalia et servi essent pars aliqua congregationis civilis. Si vero propter acquirendas divitias, omnes simul negotiantes ad unam civitatem pertinerent, sicut videmus eos solos sub una multitudine computari qui sub eisdem legibus et eodem regimine diriguntur ad bene vivendum."

[26] Cf. Andrzejuk, "Wladza wedlug sw. Tomasza z Akwinu."

[27] *De regno*, I, 11 [77]: "[Amicitia] namque est quae virtuosos in unum conciliat, virtutem conservat atque promovet. Ipsa est qua omnes indigent in quibuscumque negotiis peragendis, quae nec prosperis importune se ingerit, nec deserit in adversis. Ipsa est quae maximas delectationes affert, in tantum ut quaecumque delectabilia in taedium sine amicis vertantur. Quaelibet autem aspera, facilia et prope nulla facit amor; nec est alicuius tyranni tanta crudelitas, ut amicitia non delectetur." It can also unite those wielding power with those subject to it, see id., I, 11 [78–79]: "Sed boni reges, dum communi profectui studiose intendunt et eorum studio subditi plura commoda se assequi sentiunt, diliguntur a plurimis, dum subditos se amare demonstrant . . . Et ex hoc amore provenit ut bonorum regum regnum sit stabile, dum pro ipsis se subditi quibuscumque periculis exponere non recusant . . . Non est ergo facile ut principis perturbetur dominium, quem tanto consensu populus amat . . ."

[28] Cf. Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government," 103.

not aim at the restoration of virtue in a good man (*virtus boni viri*), as the virtue of a good man can be achieved only in freedom, and not by coercion.[29] Therefore, it appears that all forcible interventions of power can serve only to restore the virtue of a good citizen (*virtus boni civis*),[30] that is, introduce the unruly individual to discipline and obedience to the rules of social life. Coercion to virtue is justified only when a citizen did not manage to internalize it in the process of his education, and is striking at the unity of the community by his behavior. The necessity to use means of coercion, however, always testifies to a civilizational crisis in a given society.[31]

Finally, the care of political power for the common abundance of earthly possessions among people boils down to actions that make it possible for them to lead their lives at the level of affluence appropriate for the practice of virtue.[32]

What difficulties can political power encounter in the service of living in virtue? The first hindrance political power should take into account is the transience of a human life. It entails the impossibility of establishing the social good once and for all, and thus the necessity of constant care for it. "Men, on the other hand, cannot abide forever, because they are mortal. Even while they are alive they do not always preserve the same vigour, for the life of man is subject to many changes, and thus a man is not equally suited to the performance of the same duties throughout the whole span of his life." So it is the obligation of power to ensure the compatibility of generations ensuring the stability of social life, and also the preparation of successors for those currently in charge of various posts and offices in the community.[33]

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[29] Cf. *De regno*, I, 11 [81]: "Timor autem est debile fundamentum. Nam qui timore subduntur, si occurrat occasio qua possint impunitatem sperare, contra praesidentes insurgunt eo ardentius quo magis contra voluntatem ex solo timore cohibebantur." And also Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government," 103: "[O]nly freely willed love can engender that reordering of the soul essential to any genuine spiritual regeneration and thus to genuinely virtuous behavior."

[30] On the topic of distinguishing between the virtues of a good man and those of a good citizen, see *Sententia*, III, 3. Cf. Tomasz Kuninski, "Dobry czlowiek a dobry obywatel w ujeciu *Polityki* Arystotelesa" ("Good Man and Good Citizen in *Politics* by Aristotle"), *Diametros* 12 (2007): 60–75.

[31] See Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government," 103

[32] *De regno*, I, 16 [118]: "Ad bonam autem unius hominis vitam duo requiruntur: . . . aliud vero secundarium et quasi instrumentale, scilicet corporalium bonorum sufficientia, quorum usus est necessarius ad actum virtutis."

Another difficulty is the possible perversity of members of society. This can manifest itself in a person being too lazy to "perform what the commonweal demands" or in actions "harmful to the peace of the multitude because, by transgressing justice, they disturb the peace of others." The task of power here is to skillfully, i.e. [by its] "laws and orders, punishments and rewards," restrain citizens from "wickedness" and lead them "to virtuous deeds."[34]

Military aggression of an external enemy, which disturbs peace and social unity, can be the third hindrance on the road to achieving the power's objective. Therefore, the mission of power is to keep the community "safe from the enemy, for it would be useless to prevent internal dangers if the multitude could not be defended against external dangers."[35]

Who should wield political power?

It appears that every citizen can be a potential participant in political power. Though not every citizen can be a member of a parliament or of a judicial tribunal, a characteristic that distinguishes each citizen is his ability to cooperate with the government by performing counseling functions.[36] Furthermore, the participation of citizens in power is even advisable, due to the necessity of public support for the government and its initiatives. The possibilities of civil involvement in this regard are not restricted to merely advisory privileges, but also include electoral rights: for those who are to wield power should be elected by and from among citizens (*ad populum pertinet electio principum*).[37]

Whom should people entrust with power? If the ultimate goal of social life were the health of its participants, then, undoubtedly, power should be entrusted to experienced physicians. Were monies to be the goal, then leading businessmen would be the most befitting to wield power. And were common life to consist in exploring the fields of knowledge, then power

[33] Id., 16 [119].
[34] Id., 16 [120]. Cf. id., 10 [71]: "[M]agis laudandus est ab hominibus et praemiandus a Deo, qui totam provinciam facit pace gaudere, violentias cohibet, iustitiam servat, et disponit quid sit agendum ab hominibus suis legibus et praeceptis."
[35] Id., I, 16 [120].
[36] *Sententia,* III, 1: "Et ex hoc potest esse manifestum quid sit civis: non enim ille qui participat iudicio et concione, sed ille qui potest constitui in principatu consiliativo vel iudicativo."
[37] See Douglas Kries, "Thomas Aquinas and the Politics of Moses," *The Review of Politics* 52:1 (1990): 92.

should be wielded by the best teachers.[38] Since, however, human communities ultimately exist to live a life of virtue, it appears that those who wield power should first and foremost be characterized by appropriate virtues.[39]

So what virtue should characterize a man wielding power? He should be a good and, above all else, a prudent man. This means that he should be comprehensibly equipped with moral virtues (*vir bonus*), and especially with the virtue of prudence, which not only helps a man to lead himself, but also predisposes him to ruling others. Were, however, a man in power to possess prudence allowing him to merely fulfill the duties of a citizen, meaning prudence making up the virtue of a good citizen (*virtus boni civis*), he would not yet have appropriate competencies for those who govern the community (*virtus boni principis*). This is because power requires greater prudence—such prudence which is a result of a special upbringing and which can bear the burden of both individual and social life.[40] The necessity of people in power to be prudent is also corroborated by the gravity of their obligations and the nature of means they have at their disposal. Taking reckless actions or carelessly using the means of coercion might lead to undesirable and very dangerous situations. Prudent power is thus necessary for the broadly understood safety of those subject to it.[41]

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[38] *De regno*, I, 15 [106]: "Si igitur finis hominis esset bonum quodcumque in ipso existens, et regendae multitudinis finis ultimus esset similiter ut tale bonum multitudo acquireret et in eo permaneret; et si quidem talis ultimus sive unius hominis sive multitudinis finis esset corporalis, vita et sanitas corporis, medici esset officium. Si autem ultimus finis esset divitiarum affluentia, oeconomus rex quidam multitudinis esset. Si vero bonum cognoscendae veritatis tale quid esset, ad quod posset multitudo pertingere, rex haberet doctoris officium."

[39] Cf. id., I, 10 [68]: "Sic igitur maior virtus requiritur ad regendum domesticam familiam, quam ad regendum se ipsum, multoque maior ad regimen civitatis et regni. Est igitur excellentis virtutis bene regium officium exercere; debetur igitur ei excellens in beatitudine praemium."

[40] See *Sententia*, III, 3: "Et hoc ideo, quia non est eadem virtus principis et civis . . . Magnum enim principatum exercere addiscit homo, et per subiectionem et per exercitium in minoribus officiis. Et quantum ad hoc bene dicitur in proverbio, quod non potest bene principari, qui non fuit sub principe". See also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, 47, II, vol. 36: *Prudence*, ed. Thomas Gilby (London: Blackfriars, 2006), 36: "[E]t ideo in virtute boni viri includitur etiam virtus boni principis."

[41] Cf. C.W. Cassinelli, "Political Authority: Its Exercise and Possession," *The Western Political Quarterly* 14:3 (1961): 646: "The governor's exercise of political authority is always accompanied by his implicit threat to punish disobedience, and his possession of political authority is always accompanied by his governed's belief that he should have this coercive power. However, the threat of physical coercion must be quite divorced from the situation where political authority is exercised, while the governor would not possess political authority at all if he were not recognized as having the right to make such a threat."

To the virtue of prudence the man wielding power adds magnanimity.[42] It makes him such that "he does seek honour and glory, but not as something great which could be a sufficient reward of virtue. And beyond this he demands nothing more of men, for among all earthly goods the chief good, it seems, is this, that men bear testimony to the virtue of a man."[43] Thus, generosity of spirit focuses the attention of power on virtue to the extent that beside virtue it does not see any other reason for its existence and any other reward for its service. A dislike of distinctions, however, does not stem from the virtue of prudence; it is one of the virtues of a good man, which one in power should possess. "[F]or it is the duty of a good man to take no account of glory, just as he should take no account of other temporal goods. It is the mark of a virtuous and brave soul to despise glory as he despises life, for justice's sake."[44]

People wielding power are not always "virtuous and strong in spirit" enough to treat it only as a service towards a virtue-based life. Many of them, though virtuous before being granted power, neglect their virtues after their election to office. The office they hold weakens their moral condition and turns out to be a trial too hard to bear.[45] This of course does not mean that power always demoralizes those who wield it.[46] Rather, it means that coming into power requires previous preparation. A candidate for power should learn how to be the servant of virtue before actually accepting authority, so that power itself would eventually become a virtue worth developing. It appears that power that serves virtue and is a virtue is the only guarantee of governance free from corruption. The more power drifts apart from serving virtue and being virtue, the more it puts those whom it should serve and those who should be serving at risk of demoralization.

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[42] *De regno*, I, 8 [56]: "Nihil autem principem, qui ad bona peragenda instituitur, magis decet quam animi magnitudo." While discussing other virtues of the king, "Thomas enumerates justice, gentleness and graciousness" (Andrzejuk, "Wladza wedlug sw. Tomasza z Akwinu").

[43] *De regno*, I, 8 [60].

[44] Id., I, 8 [57]. St. Thomas further states: "[U]nde fit quiddam mirabile, ut quia virtuosos actus sequitur gloria, ipsa gloria virtuose contemnatur, et ex contemptu gloriae homo gloriosus reddatur."

[45] Id., I, 10 [73]: "Multi enim ad principatus culmen pervenientes, a virtute deficiunt, qui, dum in statu essent infimo, virtuosi videbantur."

[46] For instance, an opposite position was taken by Lord Acton, who wrote in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority" (Martin H. Manser, *The Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 225).

What vices does power generate when it stops serving virtue? Such power appears to be conducive to the development of vices characteristic of ancient tyrants.[47] Exercising tyrannical power makes those who govern covetous and envious, and thus insatiable in their drive for the multiplication of glory and wealth, even for the price of blatant injustice.[48] Their virtueless lives make them distrustful and perverse, ready to hinder all progress among other citizens. Their own ill fame makes them fearful of the spread of a virtuous life within the community; for if their subjects became "virtuous from acquiring valour and high spirit," then they might "want to cast off their iniquitous domination" and depose them.[49] For corrupt power, however, there is nothing worse than the specter of losing authority.[50] Therefore, in order to maintain control over society, they fight against friendship, upset peace, sow discord, prohibit marriages and meetings, and even spread poverty.[51] Instead of a society they would like to see a mass of individuals, and instead of citizens—listless and mute servants, incapable of deeds that require courage and perseverance.[52] Ultimately, fear is the foundation of their degenerated power, so they try hard to make all their subordinates live in constant uncertainty and threat.[53]

How can citizens defend themselves against demoralizing power? It appears they can do this in three ways. First, they should make every effort to give power to people with no inclination towards tyranny.[54] This is not an easy task. It is difficult to avoid unctuous people, who after taking over

[47] See *De regno*, I, 2 [11]: "Si igitur regimen iniustum per unum tantum fiat qui sua commoda ex regimine quaerat, non autem bonum multitudinis sibi subiectae, talis rector tyrannus vocatur, nomine a fortitudine derivato, quia scilicet per potentiam opprimit, non per iustitiam regit: unde et apud antiquos potentes quique tyranni vocabantur. Si vero iniustum regimen non per unum fiat, sed per plures, siquidem per paucos, oligarchia vocatur, id est principatus paucorum, quando scilicet pauci propter divitias opprimunt plebem, sola pluralitate a tyranno differentes. Si vero iniquum regimen exerceatur per multos, democratia nuncupatur, id est potentatus populi, quando scilicet populus plebeiorum per potentiam multitudinis opprimit divites. Sic enim populus totus erit quasi unus tyrannus."

[48] Id., I, 4 [26].

[49] Id., I, 4 [27].

[50] Cf. *Sententia*, III, 5: "[S]ed postea homines, propter utilitates quae veniunt ex bonis communibus quae sibi principantes usurpant et quae veniunt etiam ex ipso iure principatus, volunt semper principari, ac si principari esset sanum esse, et non principari, esset infirmum esse. Sic enim videntur homines appetere principatum, sicut infirmi appetunt sanitatem."

[51] *De regno*, I, 4 [27]. Cf. Andrzejuk, "Wladza wedlug sw. Tomasza z Akwinu."

[52] *De regno*, I, 4 [28]: "Naturale etiam est ut homines, sub timore nutriti, in servilem degenerent animum et pusillanimes fiant ad omne virile opus et strenuum."

[53] Id., I, 11 [81].

power turn out to be tyrants.[55] It is difficult to get to know a person's character before letting him or her wield power—indeed, "authority shows the man."[56]

Next, power should be subordinate to legal restrictions preventing its deviation into tyranny.[57] Limiting the terms of office for those who wield political power appears to be an effective measure in this respect. On the one hand, it allows the society to repay its moral debt to those in power, so that those who took care of the well-being of other people can, after stepping down, experience care for their own welfare by the new political power.[58] On the other hand, it ensures that citizens do not assign all responsibility for the common good to those in power, as is often the case when power holders hold their positions for too long, but rather become magnanimously involved in the life of the community, treating the common good as their own.[59]

And last, citizens should procure the possibility of defying political power, and even overthrowing it, if those holding it resort to tyranny.[60] This is required by the common good of the whole community, as immoral power does not retain evil within the boundaries of itself, but spreads it to other people by transforming their degenerate customs into law.[61]

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[54] Id., I, 7 [42]: "Primum autem est necessarium ut talis conditionis homo ab illis, ad quos hoc spectat officium, promoveatur in regem, quod non sit probabile in tyrannidem declinare." Cf. Kries, "Thomas Aquinas and the Politics of Moses," 91.

[55] Cf. *De regno*, I, 11 [83]: "Nullus autem verius hypocrita dici potest quam qui regis assumit officium et exhibet se tyrannum."

[56] Id., I, 10 [73]. "Ααρχη ανδρα δείξει" (Bias) (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 2, 1130 [www.perseus.tufts.edu, accessed on 26.03.2014). Cf. a quote from Abraham Lincoln: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power" (William E. Davis, *Peace and Prosperity in an Age of Incivility* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 15).

[57] *De regno*, I, 7 [42]: "Deinde sic disponenda est regni gubernatio, ut regi iam instituto tyrannidis subtrahatur occasio. Simul etiam sic eius temperetur potestas, ut in tyrannidem de facili declinare non possit."

[58] See *Sententia*, III, 5: "A principio enim ipsi qui principabantur quasi aliis servientes reputabant dignum, sicut et erat, ut ipsi in parte ministrarent aliis intendentes utilitati aliorum, et iterum alio tempore aliquis alius principaretur qui intenderet ad bonum eius, sicut ipse prius intenderat ad bonum aliorum."

[59] See *De regno*, I, 5 [31]: "Plerumque namque contingit, ut homines sub rege viventes, segnius ad bonum commune nitantur, utpote aestimantes id quod ad commune bonum impendunt non sibi ipsis conferre sed alteri, sub cuius potestate vident esse bona communia. Cum vero bonum commune non vident esse in potestate unius, non attendunt ad bonum commune quasi ad id quod est alterius, sed quilibet attendit ad illud quasi suum."

Conclusion

The above considerations attempted to elucidate the thesis of the servient character of political power. In the light of above analysis, two conclusions appear to be especially established. First, as the personal nature of man requires living in society, and as this fact demands the existence of political power, the ultimate goal of service fulfilled by this power should be identical with the natural goal of every human being, meaning a life of virtue. Service to the cause of citizens' virtue, in turn, requires that the fundamental duties of power include the protection of public peace, the promotion of actions towards the good, and striving for a common abundance of worldly possessions. Second, since virtue is to be the greatest good in social life, then it appears that another necessary condition for electing those in political power is to make sure that aspirants to such are characterized by the appropriate level of virtuous development. Each candidate should be first and foremost a person possessing a high moral quality (*virtus boni viri*), where prudence and magnanimity appear to be virtues especially fitting power (*virtutes boni principis*). Both the aforementioned conclusions seem to justify not only the legitimacy of understanding political power as a service, but also the need of treating it in this way in real social life.

THE SERVIENT CHARACTER OF POLITICAL POWER ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

SUMMARY

The author attempts to justify the thesis of the servient character of political power. By his analyses, he arrives at two conclusions. First, the ultimate goal of service fulfilled by political power should be identical with the natural goal of every human being, meaning a life of virtue. Hence, service to the cause of the citizens' virtue requires that the fundamental duties of power include the protection of public peace, the promotion of actions towards the com-

[60] See id., I, 7 [49]: "[S]i ad ius multitudinis alicuius pertineat sibi providere de rege, non iniuste ab eadem rex institutus potest destitui vel refrenari eius potestas, si potestate regia tyrannice abutatur."

[61] Cf. id., I, 12 [89]: "Adiicitur autem ad eorum impoenitentiam quod omnia sibi licita existimant quae impune sine resistentia facere potuerunt: unde non solum emendare non satagunt quae male fecerunt, sed sua consuetudine pro auctoritate utentes, peccandi audaciam transmittunt ad posteros, et sic non solum suorum facinorum apud Deum rei tenentur, sed etiam eorum quibus apud Deum peccandi occasionem reliquerunt."

mon good, and striving for a common abundance of worldly possessions. Second, to elect those in political power it is necessary to make sure that aspirants to such are characterized by the appropriate level of virtuous development. Each candidate should be first and foremost a person possessing a high moral quality (*virtus boni viri*), where prudence and magnanimity appear to be virtues especially fitting power (*virtutes boni principis*).

KEYWORDS: service, political power, authority, politics, citizen, virtue, prudence, magnanimity, human nature, Thomas Aquinas.