Whether vainglory is opposed to magnanimity?

Objection 1. It seems that vainglory is not opposed to magnanimity. For, as stated above (a. 1), vainglory consists in glorying in things that are not, which pertains to falsehood; or in earthly and perishable things, which pertains to covetousness; or in the testimony of men, whose judgment is uncertain, which pertains to imprudence. Now these vices are not contrary to magnanimity. Therefore vainglory is not opposed to magnanimity.

Objection 2. Further, vainglory is not, like pusillanimity, opposed to magnanimity by way of deficiency, for this seems inconsistent with vainglory. Nor is it opposed to it by way of excess, for in this way presumption and ambition are opposed to magnanimity, as stated above (q. 130, a. 2; q. 131, a. 2): and these differ from vainglory. Therefore vainglory is not opposed to magnanimity.

Objection 3. Further, a gloss on Phil. 2:3, "Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory," says: "Some among them were given to dissension and restlessness, contending with one another for the sake of vainglory." But contention* is not opposed to magnanimity. Neither therefore is vainglory.

On the contrary, Tully says (De Offic. i) under the heading, "Magnanimity consists in two things: We should beware of the desire for glory, since it enslaves the mind, which a magnanimous man should ever strive to keep untrammeled." Therefore it is opposed to magnanimity.

I answer that, As stated above (q. 103, a. 1, ad 3), glory is an effect of honor and praise: because from the fact that a man is praised, or shown any kind of reverence, he acquires charity in the knowledge of others. And since magnanimity is about honor, as stated above (q. 129, Aa. 1,2), it follows that it also is about glory:

seeing that as a man uses honor moderately, so too does he use glory in moderation. Wherefore inordinate desire of glory is directly opposed to magnanimity.

Reply to Objection 1. To think so much of little things as to glory in them is itself opposed to magnanimity. Wherefore it is said of the magnanimous man (Ethic. iv) that honor is of little account to him. In like manner he thinks little of other things that are sought for honor's sake, such as power and wealth. Likewise it is inconsistent with magnanimity to glory in things that are not; wherefore it is said of the magnanimous man (Ethic. iv) that he cares more for truth than for opinion. Again it is incompatible with magnanimity for a man to glory in the testimony of human praise, as though he deemed this something great; wherefore it is said of the magnanimous man (Ethic. iv), that he cares not to be praised. And so, when a man looks upon little things as though they were great, nothing hinders this from being contrary to magnanimity, as well as to other virtues.

Reply to Objection 2. He that is desirous of vainglory does in truth fall short of being magnanimous, because he glories in what the magnanimous man thinks little of, as stated in the preceding Reply. But if we consider his estimate, he is opposed to the magnanimous man by way of excess, because the glory which he seeks is something great in his estimation, and he tends thereto in excess of his deserts.

Reply to Objection 3. As stated above (q. 127, a. 2, ad 2), the opposition of vices does not depend on their effects. Nevertheless contention, if done intentionally, is opposed to magnanimity: since no one contends save for what he deems great. Wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 3) that the magnanimous man is not contentious, because nothing is great in his estimation.

^{*} Cf. q. 38

The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Second and Revised Edition, 1920.