

I

Government and politics

(a) *Summa theologiae* Ia 96: Concerning the dominion which belonged to man in the state of innocencearticulus 3:¹ *Whether men were equal in the state of innocence*²

It seems that all men were equal in the state of innocence.

obiectio 1: For Gregory says: 'Where we do not sin, we are all equal.'³ But in the state of innocence there was no sin. Therefore all were equal.

obiectio 2: Moreover, similarity and equality are the basis of mutual love, according to Ecclesiasticus 13:19: 'Every beast loveth its like; so also every man him that is nearest to himself.' Now in that state there was among men abundant love, which is the bond of peace. Therefore all were equal in the state of innocence.

obiectio 3: Moreover, when the cause ceases, the effect ceases also. But the inequality which now exists among men seems to arise, on the side of God, from the fact that He rewards some and punishes others; and, on the side of nature, from the fact that some are born weak and disadvantaged by some defect of nature, whereas others are strong and perfect. But this would not have been so in the primitive state.

sed contra: It is said at Romans 13:1 that the things which come from God are ordered. But order seems to consist especially in disparity; for Augustine says: 'Order is the disposition of equal and unequal things in such a way as to give to each its proper place.'⁴ Therefore in the primitive

¹ This *quaestio* has four articles, the first two of which are: 'Whether man in the state of innocence was lord of the animals'; and 'Whether man was lord of all other creatures'.

² I.e. would all men have been equal had the Fall not occurred?

³ *Moralia* 21:15 (*PL* 76:203).

⁴ *De civitate Dei* 19:13.

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state, in which everything was entirely proper, there would have been found disparity.

responsio: It is necessary to say that in the primitive state there would have been some disparity, at least as regards sex, because without diversity of sex there would be no generation; and similarly as regards age, for some would have been born of others; nor were those who mated sterile. Moreover, as regards the soul, there would have been diversity in the matter of righteousness and knowledge. For man worked not of necessity, but by the free will which equips the man who has it to apply his mind either more or less to the doing or willing or understanding of something. Hence some would have become more proficient in righteousness and knowledge than others.

There might have been bodily disparity also. For the human body was not so totally exempt from the laws of nature as not to receive from external sources varying degrees of advantage and help; for its life also was sustained by food. And so nothing prevents us from saying that, according to the different dispositions of the air and the different positions of the stars, some would have been born more robust in body than others, and greater and more beautiful and more fair; although even in those who were surpassed in these respects, there would have been no defect or sin either in soul or body.

ad 1: By these words Gregory intends to exclude the disparity which exists as between righteousness and sin from which it comes about that some persons are made subject to the coercion of others as a punishment.⁵

ad 2: Equality is the cause of equality in mutual love. Yet there can be greater love between unequals than between equals, even if not an equal reciprocation. For a father naturally loves his son more than a brother loves his brother, although the son does not love his father as much as he is loved by him.

ad 3: The cause of disparity could lie on the side of God [even in the state of innocence]: not, indeed, because He would punish some and reward others, but because He might exalt some above others, so that the beauty of order might shine forth all the more brightly among men. Disparity might arise also on the side of nature in the manner

⁵ I.e. he does not mean to say that where there is no sin there is no inequality, but that such inequality as there is is not penal.

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described in the body of the article, without there being any defect of nature.

articulus 4: *Whether in the state of innocence man would have had dominion over man*

It seems that in the state of innocence man would not have had dominion over man.

obiectio 1: For Augustine says at *De civitate Dei* 19: ‘God did not intend that His rational creature, made in His own image, should have lordship over any but irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over the beasts.’⁶

obiectio 2: Moreover, that which was introduced as a punishment for sin would not have existed in the state of innocence. But the fact that man is subject to man was introduced as a punishment for sin. For after sin it was said to the woman (Genesis 3:16): ‘Thou shalt be under thy husband’s power.’ Therefore in the state of innocence man would not have been subject to man.

obiectio 3: Moreover, subjection is opposed to liberty. But liberty is one of the foremost blessings, and would not have been lacking in the state of innocence, where, as Augustine says at *De civitate Dei* 14, ‘nothing was absent that a good will might seek’.⁷ Therefore man would not have had dominion over man in the state of innocence.

sed contra: The condition of man in the state of innocence was not more exalted than the condition of the angels. But among the angels some have dominion over others, and so one order is called ‘Dominations’.⁸ Therefore it was not contrary to the dignity of the state of innocence that one man should be ruled by another.

responsio: ‘Dominion’ is understood in two ways. In one way, it is contrasted with servitude; and so a master [*dominus*] in this sense is one to whom someone is subject as a slave. In another way, dominion is understood as referring in a general way to [the rule of] any kind of subject

⁶ *De civitate Dei* 19:15.

⁷ *De civitate Dei* 14:10.

⁸ Cf. Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21. The earliest and most influential Christian treatise on the ‘orders’ of the angels is Ps.-Dionysius, *De caelesti hierarchia* (PG 3; and see *Pseudo Dionysius: the Complete Works*, ed. and trans. C. Luibheid *et al.* (New York, 1987)). For St Thomas’s discussion of the angelic orders see Ia 108:6.

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whatsoever; and in this sense even he who has the office of governing and directing free men can be called a master. In the first sense, therefore, one man could not have had dominion over other men in the state of innocence; but, in the second sense, one man could have had dominion over others even in the state of innocence. The reason for this is that a slave differs from a free man in that the latter ‘exists for his own sake’, as is said at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, whereas a slave is subordinated to another.⁹ One man is therefore the master of another as his slave when he treats the one whose master he is as a means to his own – that is, to the master’s – advantage. And since every man’s proper good is desirable to himself, and, consequently, it is a sorrowful thing to anyone to cede to another a good which ought to be his own, therefore such dominion cannot exist without pain on the part of the subject; and so such dominion could not have existed in the state of innocence as between one man and another.

On the other hand, one man is the master of another as a free subject when he directs him either towards his own good, or towards the common good. And such dominion would have existed in the state of innocence between man and man, for two reasons. First, because man is by nature a social animal,¹⁰ and so in the state of innocence would have lived a social life. But there cannot be social life among a multitude of people save under the direction of someone who is to look to the common good; for many, as such, seek many things, whereas one attends only to one. And so the Philosopher says at the beginning of the *Politics* that wherever many things are directed to one end, there is always found one at the head, directing them.¹¹ Second, if one man were pre-eminent over all the others in knowledge and righteousness, it would be inconsistent [with the idea of moral pre-eminence] for such pre-eminence not to be directed to the benefit of others, according to 1 Peter 4:10: ‘As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another.’ Hence Augustine says at *De civitate Dei* 19: ‘For it is not out of any desire for mastery that just men command; rather they do so from a dutiful concern for others’;¹² and: ‘This is prescribed by the order of nature: it is thus that God created man.’¹³

By this are shown the replies to all the *obiectioes* which proceeded from the first mode of dominion.

⁹ *Metaphysics* 1:2 (982b26).

¹⁰ See n. 17, below.

¹¹ *Politics* 1:5 (1254a28).

¹² *De civitate Dei* 19:14.

¹³ *De civitate Dei* 19:15.

De regimine principum

(b) *The treatise 'De regimine principum' or 'De regno'*¹⁴*Preface*

*The author sets forth his intention in writing to the king of Cyprus*¹⁵ As I considered with myself what I should undertake that would be worthy of royal majesty and in keeping with my calling and office, it occurred to me that what I might offer a king above all would be a book written on the subject of kingship, in which I should, to the best of my powers, diligently draw out both the origin of a kingdom and what pertains to the king's office, according to the authority of Divine scripture, the teachings of the philosophers, and the examples given by those who praise princes, relying for the beginning, progression and completion of the work upon the aid of Him Who is King of kings and Lord of lords, by Whom kings reign: the Lord, 'a great God, and a great King above all gods' (Psalm 95:3).

Book 1

Chapter 1: That it is necessary for men who live together to be subject to diligent rule by someone To fulfil this intention, we must begin by explaining how the title 'king' is to be understood. Now in all cases where things are directed towards some end but it is possible to proceed in more than one way, it is necessary for there to be some guiding principle, so that the due end may be properly achieved. For example, a ship is driven in different directions according to the force of different winds, and it will not reach its final destination except by the industry of the steersman who guides it into port. Now man has a certain end towards which the whole of his life and activity is directed; for as a creature who acts by intelligence, it is clearly his nature to work towards some end.¹⁶ But men can proceed towards that end in different ways, as the very diversity of human efforts and activities shows. Man therefore needs something to guide him towards his end.

Now each man is imbued by nature with the light of reason, and he is directed towards his end by its action within him. If it were proper for man to live in solitude, as many animals do, he would need no other guide towards his end; for each man would then be a king unto himself, under God, the supreme King, and would direct his own actions by the light of reason divinely given to him. But man is by nature a social and

¹⁴ See Introduction, p. xix.

¹⁵ The chapter headings which appear in this treatise are the additions of a later editor.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Ethics* 1:7 (1098a5).

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political animal, who lives in a community [*in multitudine vivens*]:¹⁷ more so, indeed, than all other animals; and natural necessity shows why this is so. For other animals are furnished by nature with food, with a covering of hair, and with the means of defence, such as teeth, horns or at any rate speed in flight. But man is supplied with none of these things by nature. Rather, in place of all of them reason was given to him, by which he might be able to provide all things for himself, by the work of his own hands.¹⁸ One man, however, is not able to equip himself with all these things, for one man cannot live a self-sufficient life. It is therefore natural for man to live in fellowship with many others.

Moreover, other animals are endowed with a natural awareness of everything which is useful or harmful to them. For example, the sheep naturally judges the wolf to be an enemy. Some animals even have a natural awareness which enables them to recognise certain medicinal plants and other things as being necessary to their lives. Man, however, has a natural understanding of the things necessary to his life only in a general way, and it is by the use of reason that he passes from universal principles to an understanding of the particular things which are necessary to human life. But it is not possible for one man to apprehend all such things by reason. It is therefore necessary for man to live in a community, so that each man may devote his reason to some particular branch of learning: one to medicine, another to something else, another to something else again. And this is shown especially by the fact that only man has the capacity to use speech, by means of which one man can reveal the whole content of his mind to another.¹⁹ Other animals express their feelings to each other in a general way, as when a dog shows his anger by barking and the other animals show their feelings in various ways; but one man is more able to communicate with another than any other animal is, even those which are seen to be gregarious, such as cranes, ants and bees.²⁰ Solomon, therefore, is thinking of this at Ecclesiastes 4:9 where he says: ‘Two are better than one, because they have the reward of mutual companionship.’

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics* 1:2 (1253a2). St Thomas’s ‘man is by nature a social and political animal’ – *Naturale autem est homini ut sit animal sociale et politicum* – is taken from William of Moerbeke’s Latin translation of the *Politics*. On the whole it conveys the meaning of Aristotle’s ὁ ἀνθρώπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον better than the literal translation ‘political animal’ would. See also p. 9, below. ‘Community’ is probably as close as one can get to what St Thomas usually means by *multitudo*.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *De partibus animalium* 4:10 (687a19).

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Politics* 1:2 (1253a1).

²⁰ Aristotle, *Historia animalium* 1:1 (488a10).

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If, therefore, it is natural for man to live in fellowship with many others, it is necessary for there to be some means whereby such a community of men may be ruled. For if many men were to live together with each providing only what is convenient for himself, the community would break up into its various parts unless one of them had responsibility for the good of the community as a whole, just as the body of a man and of any other animal would fall apart if there were not some general ruling force to sustain the body and secure the common good of all its parts. Solomon is thinking of this at Proverbs 11:14 where he says: 'Where there is no governor, the people shall be scattered.' This accords with reason; for individual interests and the common good are not the same. Individuals differ as to their private interests, but are united with respect to the common good, and such differences have various causes. It is fitting, therefore, that, beyond that which moves the individual to pursue a good peculiar to himself, there should be something which promotes the common good of the many. It is for this reason that wherever things are organised into a unity, something is found that rules all the rest.²¹ For by a certain order of Divine providence all bodies in the material universe are ruled by the primary, that is, the celestial, body, and all bodies by rational creatures.²² Also, in one man the soul rules the body, and, within the soul, the irascible and concupiscible appetites are ruled by the reason.²³ Again, among the

²¹ Aristotle, *Politics* 1:5 (1254a28).

²² For St Thomas's cosmology see *SCG* 3:23; for the main classical origin of this cosmology see Aristotle, *De caelo* 1–2 *passim*. See also *SCG* 3:78.

²³ For St Thomas's explanation of this terminology, which the reader will encounter several times, see e.g. Ia 80:1–2; 81:1–3; IaIIae 9:2; 17:2. Scholastic psychology posits three parts of the soul: appetite, reason, and will. The soul is correctly ordered when reason controls the appetite and commands the will. The idea is, of course, in essence the same as the account of individual justice given by Plato at *Republic* 434D–449A. 'Appetite' is the name given by St Thomas to all strivings or drives, or (to give *appetitus* its literal meaning) all 'seekings' after something. Appetites can be conscious or unconscious, intellectual or sensitive. 'Sensitive' appetites – i.e. appetites arising from sensation – tend towards particular objects desired by the senses. They are 'concupiscible' insofar as they are directed towards a sensible good or strive to avoid a sensible evil; they are 'irascible' if the striving encounters an obstacle to be overcome. Concupiscible appetites include such things as love, hate, desire, aversion, joy and grief; irascible appetites such things as hope, despair, fear and anger. The movements of the appetites are the cause of emotions. 'Intellectual' or 'rational' appetite is the same thing as will. It differs from the sensitive appetite because it tends of itself towards the good as such, and therefore necessarily towards God as the Supreme Good. Sin occurs when an 'object moves the sensitive appetite, and the sensitive appetite inclines the reason and will' (IaIIae 85:1). At Ia 81:2 the terms 'concupiscible' and 'irascible' are attributed to Nemesius (*De natura hominis* 16; 17 (*PL* 40:672; 676)) and Damascene (*De fide orthodoxa* 2:12 (*PG* 94:928)). There is a useful synopsis at *NCE* 1, s.v. 'Appetite'. See also E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas*, pt II, ch. 8.

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members of the body there is one ruling part, either the heart or the head, which moves all the others.²⁴ It is fitting, therefore, that in every multitude there should be some ruling principle.²⁵

Chapter II: The various forms of lordship or government But where matters are directed towards some end, there may be one way of proceeding which is right and another which not right; and so we find that the government of a community can be directed both rightly and not rightly.²⁶ Now something is directed rightly when it is led to its proper end, and not rightly when it is led to an end which is not proper to it. But the end proper to a community of free men is different from that of slaves. For a free man is one who is the master of his own actions, whereas a slave, insofar as he is a slave, is the property of another.²⁷ If, therefore, a community of free men is ordered by a ruler in such a way as to secure the common good, such rule will be right and just inasmuch as it is suitable to free men. If, however, the government is directed not towards the common good but towards the private good of the ruler, rule of this kind will be unjust and perverted;²⁸ and such rulers are warned by the Lord at Ezekiel 34:2, where He says: 'Woe be to the shepherds that do feed themselves' – because they seek only gain for themselves. 'Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?' Shepherds must seek the good of their flock, and all rulers the good of the community subject to them.

If, therefore, government is exercised unjustly by one man alone, who, in ruling, seeks gain for himself and not the good of the community subject to him, such a ruler is called a tyrant, a name derived from [the Greek word *τυραννίς*, which means] 'force', because he oppresses with power, and does not rule with justice.²⁹ Hence, among the ancients all men of power were called 'tyrants'.³⁰ If, however, unjust government is exercised not by one but by several, when this is done by a few it is called 'oligarchy', that is, 'rule by the few'; and this comes about when, by reason of their wealth, the few oppress the people, and it differs from tyranny only with respect

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5:1 (1013a5).

²⁵ Cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 5:2.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* 3:6 (1279a17).

²⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1:2 (982b25).

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* 3:7 (1279a22); *Ethics* 8:10 (1159b31).

²⁹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 9:3 (*PL* 82:344); although, like so many medieval etymologies, this one is not correct.

³⁰ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 5:19.

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to number. Again, if wrongful government is exercised by the many, this is named 'democracy', that is, 'rule by the people'; and this comes about when the common people oppress the rich by force of numbers. In this way the whole people will be like a single tyrant.

Similarly, it is proper to distinguish the various kinds of just government. For if the administration is in the hands of a certain section of the community [*aliquam multitudinem*], as when the military class [*multitudo bellatorum*] governs a city or province, this is commonly called polity.³¹ If, again, administration is in the hands of a few but virtuous men, rule of this kind is called aristocracy: that is, 'the best rule', or 'rule of the best men' [*optimorum*], who for this reason are called aristocrats [*optimates*]. And if just government belongs to one man alone, he is properly called a king. Hence the Lord, at Ezekiel 37:24, says: 'And David my servant shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd.' It is clearly shown by this verse that it is the nature of kingship that there should be one who rules, and that he should be a shepherd who seeks the common good and not his own gain.³²

Now since it is fitting for man to live in a community because he would not be able to provide all the necessaries of life for himself were he to remain alone, it must be that a society of many men will be perfect to the extent that it is self-sufficient in the necessaries of life. The self-sufficient life is certainly present to some extent in the family of one household, with respect, that is, to the natural activities of nourishment and the procreation of children and other things of this kind; and one locality may be sufficient in all those things belonging to a particular trade; and a city, which is a perfect [i.e. a complete] community, is sufficient in all the necessaries of life.³³

³¹ This sentence does not lend itself to exact translation. In the context, I cannot see what *aliquam multitudinem*, 'a certain multitude', can mean other than 'a section of the community'. 'The military class' is a pretty free translation of *multitudo bellatorum*, but I could not think of a better way of conveying what St Thomas seems to mean. Aristotle's use of the word 'polity' is ambiguous, and Aquinas has inherited this ambiguity with the term. Aristotle's chief meaning seems to be rule by a fairly numerous middle class, because he thinks that a constitution midway between rule by the few and rule by the many will be most stable (cf. *Politics* 3:7 (1279a37); 4:8 (1293b33); 4:11 (1295a31)). St Thomas here seems to be remembering the passage at *Politics* 3:7 (1279b1), where Aristotle says that the shared excellence of good government by the many is likely to be military and that the franchise will be related to the bearing of arms. One cannot help feeling that St Thomas has rather missed the point. But he refers to polity again at the beginning of ch. IV, as the good form of rule by the many.

³² The threefold classification of good and bad constitutional forms given here and in the preceding paragraph is derived from Aristotle's *Politics* 3:7 (1279a25).

³³ Aristotle, *Politics* 1:2 (1252b9).

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But this is all the more true of a single province, because of the need for common defence and mutual assistance against enemies.³⁴ Hence, he who rules a perfect community, that is, a city or province, is properly called a king; but he who rules a household is not a king, but the father of a family. He does, however, bear a certain resemblance to a king, and for this reason kings are sometimes called the ‘fathers’ of their people.

From what we have said, therefore, it is clear that a king is one who rules over the community of a city or province, and for the common good. Hence Solomon, at Ecclesiastes 5:8, says: ‘The king commands all the lands subject to him.’

Chapter III: That it is more beneficial for a community of men living together to be ruled by one than by many Having said these things, we must next ask whether it is more suitable for a province or city to be ruled by many or by one. This can be answered by considering the end of government itself. For it must be the task of anyone who exercises rule to secure the wellbeing of whatever it is that he rules. For example, it is the task of the steersman to preserve the ship from the perils of the sea and to guide it into a safe harbour. But the good and wellbeing of a community united in fellowship lies in the preservation of its unity. This is called peace,³⁵ and when it is removed and the community is divided against itself, social life loses its advantage and instead becomes a burden. It is for this end, therefore, that the ruler of a community ought especially to strive: to procure the unity of peace. Nor may he rightly wonder whether he ought to bring about peace in the community subject to him, any more than the physician should wonder whether he ought to heal the sick entrusted to him: for no one ought to deliberate about an end for which he must strive, but only about the means to that end.³⁶ Thus the Apostle, commending the unity of the faithful people, says at Ephesians 4:3: ‘Be ye solicitous for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ The more effectively government preserves the unity of peace, therefore, the more beneficial it is; for we call something ‘more beneficial’ when it leads more effectively to its end. Clearly, however, something which is itself one can bring about unity more effectively than something which is many can, just as the most

³⁴ This sentence is, of course, St Thomas’s gloss on Aristotle, made as a concession to the fact that he is talking about medieval kingdoms rather than Greek city-states.

³⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 19:13.

³⁶ Aristotle, *Ethics* 3:3 (1112b13).