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978-0-521-02950-6 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 42 - Courage, (2a2ae. 123-140)

Anthony Ross O.P. and P. G. Walsh

Excerpt

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 123, I

CONSEQUENTER POST JUSTITIAM CONSIDERANDUM EST DE FORTITUDINE:

et primo, de ipsa virtute fortitudinis;
 secundo, de partibus ejus;
 tertio, de dono ei correspondente;
 quarto, de praeceptis ad ipsam pertinentibus.

Circa fortitudinem autem consideranda sunt tria:

primo, quidem, de ipsa fortitudine;
 secundo, de actu praecipuo ejus, scilicet de martyrio;
 tertio, de vitiis oppositis.

Quaestio 123. de fortitudine

Circa primum quaeruntur duodecim:

1. utrum fortitudo sit virtus;
2. utrum sit virtus specialis;
3. utrum sit circa timores et audacias;
4. utrum sit solum circa timorem mortis;
5. utrum sit solum in rebus bellicis;
6. utrum sustinere sit praecipuus actus ejus;
7. utrum operetur propter proprium bonum;
8. utrum habeat delectationem in suo actu;
9. utrum fortitudo maxime consistat in repentinis;
10. utrum utatur ira in sua operatione;
11. utrum sit virtus cardinalis;
12. de comparatione ejus ad alias virtutes cardinales.

articulus 1. utrum fortitudo sit virtus

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod fortitudo non sit virtus. Dicit enim Apostolus,² *Virtus in infirmitate perficitur*. Sed fortitudo infirmitati opponitur. Ergo fortitudo non est virtus.

2. Praeterea, si est virtus, aut est theologica, aut intellectualis, aut moralis. Sed fortitudo neque continetur inter virtutes theologicas, neque inter intellectuales, ut ex supra dictis patet.³ Neque etiam videtur esse virtus

¹cf 1a2ae. 61, 2. *De Virtutibus in communi* 12²II *Corinthians* 12, 9³1a2ae. 57, 2; 62, 3

⁴Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) of Stageira in Thrace was a pupil of Plato's at the Academy. After Plato's resignation, he quitted Athens, eventually becoming tutor to Alexander the Great. He later returned to Athens, where he founded the Peripatetic school. In the half of his work which has survived, his remarkably universal genius

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COURAGE ITSELF

AFTER JUSTICE WE MUST DISCUSS COURAGE:

- first, the virtue itself of courage (123-7);
- second, its parts (128-38);
- third, the Gift of the Spirit and the blessing particularly corresponding with it (139);
- fourth, the commandments which are related to it (140).

Under the first head there are three points to consider:

- first, what courage is (123);
- second, the supreme expression of courage, namely martyrdom (124);
- third, the opposing vices (125-7).

Question 123. courage itself

Here there are twelve points of inquiry:

1. is courage a virtue?
2. is it a special virtue?
3. is it concerned with fears and acts of daring?
4. is it concerned solely with the fear of death?
5. is it found only in warfare?
6. is endurance its supreme manifestation?
7. does it work to achieve a good proper to itself?
8. is the act of courage accompanied by pleasure?
9. does it chiefly show itself in emergencies?
10. does it make use of anger?
11. is it a cardinal virtue?
12. how does it compare with other cardinal virtues?

article 1. is courage a virtue?

THE FIRST POINT:¹ 1. Courage does not seem to be a virtue, for, in the words of St Paul,² *My virtue is made perfect in weakness*. But courage is opposed to weakness, so courage is not a virtue.

2. Moreover, if courage is a virtue, it is theological, or intellectual, or moral. But our earlier discussion³ makes it clear that it is neither theological nor intellectual. Nor does it seem to be a moral virtue. For, as Aristotle^a

is reflected in treatises on logic, metaphysics, natural science, ethics and politics, and literary theory. St Thomas's discussion of courage draws extensively on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the latest and most mature of Aristotle's ethical treatises. The doctrine of courage found there is discussed in Appendix 1.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 123, I

moralis. Quia, ut Philosophus dicit,⁴ videntur aliqui esse fortes propter ignorantiam, aut etiam propter experientiam sicut milites, quæ magis pertinent ad artem quam ad virtutem moralem; quidam etiam dicuntur esse fortes propter aliquas passiones, puta propter timorem comminationum vel dehonorationis, aut etiam propter tristitiam, vel iram, seu spem: virtus autem moralis non operatur ex passione, sed ex electione, ut supra habitum est.⁵ Ergo fortitudo non est virtus.

3. Præterea, virtus humana maxime consistit in anima: est enim *bona qualitas mentis*, ut supra jam dictum est.⁶ Sed fortitudo videtur consistere in corpore: vel saltem corporis complexionem sequi. Ergo videtur quod fortitudo non sit virtus.

SED CONTRA est quod Augustinus fortitudinem inter virtutes numerat.⁷

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod secundum Philosophum,⁸ *virtus est quæ bonum facit habentem, et opus ejus bonum reddit*: unde *virtus hominis*, de qua loquimur, est *quæ bonum facit hominem, et opus ejus bonum reddit*. Bonum autem hominis est secundum rationem esse, secundum Dionysium.⁹ Et ideo ad virtutem humanam pertinet ut faciat* hominem et opus ejus secundum rationem esse.

Quod quidem tripliciter contingit. Uno modo, secundum quod ipsa ratio rectificatur: quod fit per virtutes intellectuales. Alio modo, secundum quod ipsa rectitudo rationis in rebus humanis instituitur: quod pertinet ad justitiam. Tertio, secundum quod tolluntur impedimenta hujus rectitudinis in rebus humanis ponendæ.

Dupliciter autem impeditur voluntas humana ne rectitudinem rationis sequatur. Uno modo, per hoc quod attrahitur ab aliquo delectabili ad aliud quam rectitudo rationis requirat: et hoc impedimentum tollit virtus

*Piana: *ut bonum faciat hominem*, to make man good, and his . . .

⁴*Ethics* III, 8. 1116a16

⁵1a2ae. 59, 1

⁶1a2ae. 55, 4

⁷*De Mor. Eccl.* 1, 15. PL 32, 1322

⁸*Ethics* II, 6. 1106a16

⁹cf *In De divinis nominibus* 4, lect. 22

^bSt Augustine of Hippo (354–430) was born in Numidia, the only child of a mixed marriage. His *Confessions* give the history of his academic success, his scepticism, sensuality, adherence to the Manichæan heresy, and conversion to Catholicism. Baptized in Milan by St Ambrose in 387, he was made bishop in 395. In the course of heavy episcopal duties, throughout years of heightening crisis which culminated in the collapse of North Africa before the Vandals, he produced over ninety books and a huge body of correspondence. It has been said that he Christianized Neoplatonism as St Thomas Christianized Aristoteleanism. He insisted repeatedly that

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says,⁴ some appear to be brave through ignorance, or, like soldiers, through experience, which reflects practised skill rather than moral virtue. Others still are said to be brave as a result of certain feelings—fear of threats or dishonour, for example, or even depression or anger, or hope; but moral virtue works not under the influence of feeling but by deliberate choice, as was earlier stated.⁵ So courage is not a virtue.

3. Moreover, human virtue is established chiefly in the soul, for as we said already⁶ it is *a good quality of the mind*. But courage appears to be physical, or at least to depend upon physical characteristics. So it appears that courage is not a virtue.

ON THE OTHER HAND, Augustine^b lists courage amongst the virtues.⁷

REPLY: In the words of Aristotle,⁸ *virtue is that which makes its possessor good, and also the work he performs*. So *human virtue*, the subject of our discussion, is *what makes a man good, and also the work he does*. Now according to Dionysius^{9c} human good means being in accord with reason. Therefore it is the function of human virtue to make both man and his activities at one with reason.

This is achieved in three ways. First, by setting reason itself right, which is done through the virtues of the intellect.^d Second, by establishing in human affairs sound guidance by the reason, which is the function of justice. Third, by removing obstacles to the establishment of such guidance in human affairs.

There are in fact two ways in which the human will is hindered from following right reason. The first is the pull exercised by some pleasure towards something which right reason rejects; this obstacle the virtue of

nothing he wrote was to be regarded as beyond criticism or revision. Nevertheless for St Thomas, as for most medieval writers, Augustine was the greatest among Christian thinkers. Even in this relatively short treatise there are references to no less than nineteen of his works.

^cDionysius the Areopagite was the pseudonym of an unidentified Christian writer, probably from Syria c. A.D. 500, who introduced Neo-platonism into a series of theological treatises which profoundly affected mystical theology in Western Europe. Medieval theologians did not doubt that he was the Areopagite of *Acts 17*, a figure therefore of almost apostolic authority. His works were known through a Latin translation made by Scotus Erigena c. 850.

^dIntellectual virtues are those habits which strengthen the intellect in its activity, whether speculative or practical. They are commonly distinguished from moral virtues, which strengthen the will and the sensitive appetite, and from theological virtues, which strengthen intellect and will in their relationship to God. cf 1a2ae. 57–62.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 123, 1

temperantiæ. Alio modo, per hoc quod voluntatem repellit ab eo quod est secundum rationem, propter aliquid difficile quod incumbit. Et ad hoc impedimentum tollendum requiritur fortitudo mentis, qua scilicet huiusmodi difficultatibus resistat: sicut et homo per fortitudinem corporalem impedimenta corporalia superat et repellit. Unde manifestum est quod fortitudo est virtus, inquantum facit hominem secundum rationem esse.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod virtus animæ non perficitur in infirmitate animæ, sed in infirmitate carnis, de qua Apostolus loquebatur. Hoc autem ad fortitudinem mentis pertinet, quod infirmitatem carnis fortiter ferat: quod pertinet ad virtutem patientiæ vel fortitudinis. Et quod homo propriam infirmitatem recognoscat, pertinet† ad perfectionem quæ dicitur humilitas.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod exteriorem virtutis actum quandoque aliqui efficiunt non habentes virtutem ex aliqua alia causa quam ex virtute. Et ideo Philosophus ponit¹⁰ quinque modos eorum qui similitudinarie dicuntur fortes, quasi exercentes actum fortitudinis præter virtutem. Quod quidem contingit tripliciter. Primo quidem, quia feruntur in id quod est difficile acsi non esset difficile. Quod in tres modos dividitur. Quandoque enim hoc accidit propter ignorantiam: quia scilicet homo non percipit magnitudinem periculi. Quandoque autem hoc accidit propter hoc quod homo est bonæ spei ad pericula vincenda: puta cum expertus est se sæpe pericula evasisse. Quandoque autem hoc accidit propter scientiam et artem quandam: sicut contingit in militibus, qui propter peritiam armorum et exercitium non reputant gravia pericula belli, æstimantes se per suam artem posse contra ea defendi; sicut Vegetius dicit,¹¹ *Nemo facere metuit quod se bene didicisse confidit.*

Alio modo agit aliquis actum fortitudinis sine virtute propter impulsu passionis; vel tristiciæ, quam vult repellere, vel etiam iræ. Tertio modo propter electionem, non quidem finis debiti, sed alicujus temporalis commodi acquirendi, puta honoris, voluptatis vel lucri; vel alicujus incommodi vitandi, puta vituperii, afflictionis vel damni.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod ad similitudinem corporalis fortitudinis dicitur fortitudo animæ, quæ ponitur virtus, ut dictum est. Nec tamen est contra rationem virtutis quod ex naturali complexione aliquis habeat naturalem inclinationem ad virtutem, ut supra dictum est.¹²

†Piana: *recognoscat, quod pertinet*, weakness, which is . . .

¹⁰n. 4 above

¹¹*Epitome rei militaris* I, 1

¹²1a2ae. 63, 1

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temperance removes. The second is the revulsion of the will from the end suggested by reason, because of some oppressing difficulty. To remove this obstacle mental courage is needed, with which to counter such difficulties, just as a man disposes of physical hindrances by physical courage. So it is clear that courage is a virtue, inasmuch as it makes a man conform to reason.^e

Hence: 1. Virtue of the soul is achieved not when the soul is weak, but when the body is weak, and this is what St Paul meant. Now it is the concern of courage of heart bravely to cope with weakness of the flesh, which is the task of the virtue of endurance or courage; and to acknowledge one's own weakness is the concern of the perfection called humility.

2. On occasion when persons not possessing virtue perform what is outwardly an act of virtue, they do so from a motivating cause other than virtue. This is why Aristotle¹⁰ proposes five types of persons who are called brave because they appear to be so, who in a way act bravely but without the virtue of courage. This happens in three ways. First are those who rush into a difficult situation as though it were not difficult, and in them three types of action can be distinguished; sometimes they act through ignorance, not realizing the immensity of the danger; sometimes through optimism about overcoming danger, for example when somebody has previous experience of often escaping dangers; and sometimes through knowledge and skill, as is the case with soldiers, who do not think of the serious dangers of war because of their skill in arms and their training, reckoning that they can be shielded from them by their skill. As Vegetius^f says,¹¹ *No one fears to do what he is sure he has well learnt.*

Secondly, a man performs an act of bravery without virtue under the impulse of feeling—whether depression, which he wishes to throw off, or anger. Thirdly, he does it because he chooses not what is right but rather some worldly advantage such as honour, pleasure, or gain; or to avoid some disadvantage like obloquy, pain or loss.

3. We speak of courage of soul (which is defined above as a virtue) by analogy with physical courage. Nor does it contradict the notion of virtue if someone has a natural tendency towards it because of his natural characteristics, as we said earlier.¹²

^eOn the rôle of the moral virtues making us conform to reason, see 2a2æ. 47, 1, 3; 47, 4; 58, 3, etc.

^fFlavius Renuus Vegetius flourished in the late fourth century A.D. His military treatise wholly derives from earlier authorities, and provides substantial information on the Roman art of war.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2æ. 123, 2

articulus 2. utrum fortitudo sit specialis virtus

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:¹ I. Videtur quod fortitudo non sit specialis virtus. Dicitur enim *Sap.*² quod sapientia *sobrietatem et prudentiam docet, justitiam et virtutem*: et ponitur ibi 'virtus' pro fortitudine. Cum ergo nomen 'virtutis' sit commune omnibus virtutibus, videtur quod fortitudo sit generalis virtus.

2. Præterea, Ambrosius dicit,³ *Non mediocris animi est fortitudo, quæ sola defendit ornamenta virtutum omnium, et judicia custodit; et quæ inexpiabili* prælio adversus omnia vitia decertat. Invicta ad labores, fortis ad pericula, rigidior adversus voluptates, avaritiam fugat tanquam labem quandam quæ virtutem effeminet*. Et idem postea subdit de aliis vitiis. Hoc autem non potest convenire alicui speciali virtuti. Ergo fortitudo non est specialis virtus.

3. Præterea, nomen fortitudinis a firmitate sumptum esse videtur. Sed *firmiter se habere* pertinet ad omnem virtutem, ut dicitur in *Ethic.*⁴ Ergo fortitudo est generalis virtus.

SED CONTRA est quod Gregorius connumerat⁵ eam aliis virtutibus.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est,⁶ nomen fortitudinis dupliciter accipi potest. Uno modo, secundum quod absolute importat quamdam animi firmitatem. Et secundum hoc est generalis virtus, vel potius conditio cujuslibet virtutis: quia sicut Philosophus dicit,⁷ ad virtutem requiritur *firmiter et immobiliter operari*. Alio modo potest accipi fortitudo secundum quod importat firmitatem animi in sustinendis et repellendis his in quibus maxime difficile est firmitatem habere, scilicet in

*Piana: *inexpugnabili*, invincible

¹cf 2a2æ. 137, 1; 1a2æ. 61, 3-4. III *Sent.* 33, 1, 1

²*Wisdom* 8, 7

³*De Off. Min.* 1, 39. PL 16, 86

⁴*Ethics* II, 4. 1105a34

⁵*Moralia* XXII, 1. PL 76, 212

⁶1a2æ. 61, 3-4

⁷n. 4 above

⁸At first sight this might appear one of those arbitrary interpretations of scripture so often associated with the Middle Ages. In fact *virtus* in the Vulgate text of *Wisdom* 8, 7, renders *ἀνδρεία* in the Septuagint, so that St Thomas is right in taking it to mean courage. It is one of the characteristics of scholastic Latin that so many words are used in their fullest extension; thus *virtus* may mean strength, or courage, or a virtue, or virtue in general.

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article 2. is courage a special virtue?

THE SECOND POINT:¹ I. Courage does not appear to be a special virtue. For in the *Book of Wisdom*² it says that wisdom *teaches temperance and prudence, justice and virtue*; in that passage ‘virtue’ stands for courage.^a Since, then the term virtue is common to all those qualities, it appears that courage is a general virtue.

2. Moreover, Ambrose^b says,³ *Courage is the property of no mean mind. It defends the glories and protects the decisions of all the virtues. It wages relentless war against all the vices. Unbowed by toil, brave in face of danger, even more unbending in the face of pleasures, it routs greed as a disease which emasculates virtue.* Then he makes the same point about the other vices. Now this function cannot be appropriate to any special virtue; therefore courage is not a special virtue.

3. Moreover, the term *fortitudo*, ‘courage’, appears to be derived from *firmitas*,^c steadfastness. But ‘steadfastness’ is characteristic of every virtue, as Aristotle says.⁴ Therefore courage is a general virtue.

ON THE OTHER HAND, Gregory^d lists it with the other virtues.⁵

REPLY: As has been stated earlier,⁶ the term ‘courage’ can be taken in two senses; first, in the absolute sense of steadfastness of mind, and in this case it is a general virtue or rather a condition of each and every virtue, for as Aristotle says⁷ virtue requires *steadfast and unwavering action*. Secondly, courage can be taken as meaning firmness of mind in enduring or repulsing whatever makes steadfastness outstandingly difficult; that is, particularly

^bSt Ambrose (339–97) combined legal training and philosophical education with great practical experience, having held consular office before becoming a Christian and bishop of Milan in 374. He was deeply influenced in his own writing by Greek Christian thought, especially by Basil and Origen, his debt to whom is especially evident in two major works, the *Hexameron* and the *Commentary on the Gospel of St Luke*. The three books *De Officiis Ministrorum*, addressed to the clergy of Milan, can be considered the first attempt to present a comprehensive statement of Christian ethics. It shows clearly the influence of Cicero’s *De Officiis*, itself marked by Stoic influence (see *e* below).

^cThe two words are in fact from the same root.

^dPope St Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) belonged like St Ambrose to the great Senatorial nobility. His vast practical experience (he was Prefect of Rome 572–3) was brought to bear on the affairs of the Church when he became Pope in 590, and he is regarded as having laid the foundations of the medieval papacy. He spent nearly six years (579–85) as papal representative in Constantinople, where he began the huge *Commentary, Moralia in Job*, which was finished about 595. This, like his other writing, is mainly pastoral in emphasis.

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 123, 3

aliquibus periculis gravibus. Unde Tullius dicit,⁸ quod *fortitudo est considerata periculorum susceptio et laborum perpessio*. Et sic fortitudo ponitur specialis virtus, upote materiam determinatam habens.

2. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod secundum Philosophum,⁹ nomen *virtutis* refertur ad *ultimum potentiae*. Dicitur autem uno modo potentia naturalis secundum quam aliquis potest resistere corrumpentibus, alio modo secundum quod est principium agendi: ut patet in *Meta*.¹⁰ Et ideo quia hæc acceptio est communior, nomen virtutis secundum quod importat ultimum talis potentiae, est commune: nam virtus communiter sumpta nihil est aliud quam *habitus quo quis potest bene operari*.¹¹ Secundum autem quod importat ultimum potentiae primo modo dictae, qui quidem est modus magis specialis, attribuitur speciali virtuti, scilicet fortitudini, ad quam pertinet firmiter stare contra quaecumque impugnantia.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod Ambrosius accipit¹² fortitudinem large, secundum quod importat animi firmitatem respectu quorumcumque impugnantium. Et tamen etiam secundum quod est specialis virtus habens determinatam materiam, coadjuvat ad resistendum impugnationibus omnium vitiorum. Qui enim potest firmiter stare in his quæ sunt difficillima ad sustinendum, consequens est quod sit idoneus ad resistendum aliis quæ sunt minus difficilia.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod objectio illa procedit de fortitudine primo modo dicta.¹³

articulus 3. utrum fortitudo sit circa timores et audacias

AD TERTIUM sic proceditur: I. Videtur quod fortitudo non sit circa timores et audacias. Dicit enim Gregorius,¹ *Justorum fortitudo est carnem vincere, propriis voluptatibus contraire, delectationem vitæ præsentis extinguere*. Ergo fortitudo magis videtur esse circa delectationes quam circa timores et audacias.

2. Præterea, Tullius dicit,² quod ad fortitudinem pertinet *susceptio periculorum et perpessio laborum*. Sed hoc non videtur pertinere ad passionem

⁸*De Inventione* II, 163⁹*De Cælo* I, II, 281a11¹⁰Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 12, 1019a15¹¹Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I, 9, 1366b5¹²*De Off. Min.* I, 35, PL 16, 80¹³In the body of the article¹*Moral.* VII, 21, PL 75, 778²*De Inventione* II, 163

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serious dangers. This is why Cicero^e says⁸ that *courage is undertaking dangers and enduring toils after full reflection*. So courage is defined as a special virtue because it has a limited field of action.

Hence: 1. According to Aristotle,⁹ the term *virtue* is applied to *the highest attainment of a capacity*. But natural capacity has two meanings; first, the power which enables a man to resist destructive agents, and second, the power which is a source of action, as is clear from the *Metaphysics*.¹⁰ Now because the second sense is more common virtue generally connotes the highest attainment of such capacity for action; for virtue is generally regarded as precisely *the personal disposition by which a man can perform an act well*.¹¹ But the highest attainment of a capacity in the first sense is a more special category and is assigned to a special virtue, namely courage, whose function is to stand steadfast against whatever wages war upon it.

2. Ambrose¹² takes courage in the broad meaning of steadfastness of mind towards all hostile elements. Yet even as a special virtue with a limited field of action, it co-operates in resisting the attacks of all the vices. For he who can firmly hold his ground in conditions most difficult to endure, must logically be able to resist other difficulties of a lesser order.

3. This third objection is based on the first meaning of courage given above.¹³

article 3. is courage concerned with fears and acts of daring?

THE THIRD POINT: 1. Courage does not appear to be concerned with fears and acts of daring. For Gregory says,¹ *The courage of the just consists in conquering the flesh, in opposing the pleasures to which it is prone, in suppressing attachment to the pleasures of this life*. Accordingly courage appears to be more concerned with sensual pleasure than with fears and acts of daring.

2. Moreover, Cicero says² that the function of courage is to *undertake dangers and to suffer toils*. This seems to refer not to the feeling of fear or of

^eMarcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.) turned to philosophy during retirement from politics, and reviewed for Roman readers contemporary problems exercising Greek philosophers. He claimed allegiance to the Academy, which under Antiochus of Ascalon had become less sceptical and sought common ground with Stoics and Peripatetics (see p. 30 note *b*). He is therefore eclectic, and in ethics notably attracted to Stoicism. Of his three ethical treatises (*De Finibus*, *Tusculans*, *De Officiis*), the *De Officiis* was the main source of ancient ethical theories available to medieval thinkers until the rediscovery of Aristotle in the twelfth century. It continues to be influential, as St Thomas reveals; but the *De Inventione*, from which he repeatedly quotes Cicero's definition of courage, is a wholly derivative work on rhetoric which is of no general importance for ethical theory. See further, Appendix 1.