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## Identical or Autonomous? : The Final Goals of Humanity in St. Thomas' Aquinas De regno and Dante Alighieris' De monarchia

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Historia Slavorum Occidentis 2(11), 163-180

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2016

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## IDENTICAL OR AUTONOMOUS? THE FINAL GOALS OF HUMANITY IN ST. THOMAS' AQUINAS DE REGNO AND DANTE ALIGHIERI'S DE MONARCHIA\*

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**Słowa kluczowe:** historia, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, Dante Alighieri

**Keywords:** history, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante Alighieri

**Abstract:** This study reflects on questions of a beginning and an end in the view of St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri. Critical and comparative analysis will show: (1) in what ways the authors perceived the ultimate goals of humanity; (2) what impact doing so had on their political outlooks.

This study reflects on questions of a beginning and an end in the view of two Christian authors – St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>1</sup> and Dante Alighieri<sup>2</sup>. Critical and

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\* This text originated during a scholarship at Charles University in Prague, funded by the International Visegrad Fund in the academic year 2015/2016. Primary and secondary sources used in this text were gathered during research stay at the Julius Maximilians Universität Würzburg, during research stay as a guest of Polnische Historische Mission (XI–XII. 2014), funded by the Mentioned University. Translated from Polish by a sworn translator Łukasz Gos-Furmankiewicz.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas was born either in 1223 or 1225 AD in the tiny commune of Roccasecca that has little changed since the time. He was the son of Landulf count of Aquino, a knight of moderate means. Thomas is remembered as a philosopher and theologian. The most significant influence in his early years belonged to his uncle Sinibald, the abbot of the prosperous Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino, where Thomas was educated from age 5 to 14. The parents expected him to become the uncle's successor in the abbacy, which found reflection in subsequent imprisonment by his own family when Tomas abandoned the Benedictine order to travel to Paris. Later, he studied at Naples, Paris and Cologne.

comparative analysis will show: (1) in what ways the authors perceived the ultimate goals of humanity; and (2) what impact doing so had on their political outlooks. In both cases we are dealing with treatises<sup>3</sup> that came to life

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He died in 1274, at the Cistercian abbey in Fossanova, on his way to the Second Council of Lyon, as an emissary of Pope Gregory X.

<sup>2</sup> Dante Alighieri was born in 1265 in Florence, into a family of petty nobility. The Italian became a poet, philosopher and politician, initially belonging to the pro-Papal Guelph party. His education included rhetorics, grammar, philosophy, literature and theology. He was what we could call home-schooled, he probably went to one of the schools created under the auspices of either the city or the Church, but there is no certain record on the subject (the University of Florence was established one year after Dante's death). In 1289 AD, he participated in the Battle of Campaldino. The crowning achievement of his political career that spanned from 1295 to 1300 AD was election to the position of a *prior*, one of Florence's six top magistracies, in 1300. He took part in an embassy to the pope when the power in the Tuscan city-republic passed to the Black Guelphs, admitting of no compromise with imperial supporters, who began to persecute the more conciliatory White party. The trial, confiscation of property, and exile under the pain of death gave direction to his future life, when he cast his lot with the pro-imperial Ghibellines. Till the end of his life he wandered around from one Italian court to the next, honing his literary skills. He never returned to his city, despite the amnesty that was offered. He died in Ravenna, in 1321.

<sup>3</sup> His *De monarchia*, a treatise recorded in Latin, was completed in 1312. In 1329 the work was condemned by Pope John XXII, and from 1554 to 1881 it was on the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. The doctrine defined by Dante therein is considered to be the first modern formulation of a temporal universal society. The political context of *De monarchia* reflects the political situation in the Empire (restoration of imperial authority under Henry VII [1312] and Louis IV [1328]), Italy (bloody wars, anarchy) and papacy (with on the one hand the so called Babylonian (Avignon) Papacy [1309–1377] and on the other hand Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam* [1302]). It ought to be remembered that in order to capture the Florentine's train of thought fully it is necessary to become appraised of the legacy of both Dante the thinker and Dante the poet, as regardless of the type of creative activity he embarked on, he often approached similar subjects. In academic literature Thomas's treatise is usually referenced under the title of *De regno*, although other versions are known (*De regno ad regem Cipri*; *Tractatus de regimine principum*). Began around 1265, it remained unfinished – perhaps as a consequence of the death of Hugh II of Lusignan (1253–1267), for whom it allegedly was written. This means that not only was the narration interrupted, parts already written were not edited. The work was brought to completion – unfortunately, as one might be wont to add – by Ptolemy of Lucca (1236–1327), under whose pen the *opusculum* grew in size to sixty-two chapters, divided into four books. The part modernly attributed to Thomas are the first two books, divided into twenty-six chapters. Cf. I. Th. Eschmann, *Introduction*, [in:] St. Thomas Aquinas, *On kingship to the King of Cyprus*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan, rev., introd., not. I. Th. Eschmann, Westport 1992, IX–XXXIX; Thomas Aquinas Saint, *On the government of rulers: de regimine principum of Ptolemy of Lucca, with portions attributed to Thomas Aquinas*, transl.

with two purposes: the declared (theoretical) purpose – discussion of how to organize a well-functioning state – and actual (practical) – resolution of the dispute between the *regnum* and the *sacerdotium*, that is, determination of which party deserves precedence<sup>4</sup>. Biographical coincidences<sup>5</sup> and analo-

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James M. Blythe, Philadelphia 1997, p. 1-59. In this work I rely on the following editions of source texts: Thomas Aquinas, *Divi Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici Opuscula philosophica*, ed. P. Fr. Raymundi, M. Spiazzi OP, Marietti, Taurini-Romae 1954; *Dantis Alagherii De monarchia libri III*, ed. Ludwig Bertalot, Firenze-Roma 1920. The analysed writings came to life in close enough times, both elaborated in Latin and concerning very related issues, and the structure also is similar (books, chapters, paragraphs). It needs mentioning that discussion of Aquinas's political theory is challenging to researchers, gives how, as already noted, on the one hand *De regno* was not finished, and on the other hand Thomas broached political issues – taken in connection with inquiries into the relationship between the individual and the collective – in his other works, especially the *Summa*.

<sup>4</sup> „The middle of the Middle Ages, and the golden age of both scholastic Christian thought and imperial forms of statehood, became a time of confrontation between the two social powers – the Church, point toward the supernatural as of the highest value, and the emperor, defending in that conflict some proper space for the pursuit of temporal concerns. Precisely in the middle ages those two centres of power marked with the utmost clarity two very different ways of perceiving the goal of man and pursuit of that goal. It is for this reason, as it appears, that philosophical-political thought contained in mediaeval ponderations shows with the most precisions the goals set for itself by the legal authority and the resulting relationship between those representing the spiritual order and those focusing on the temporal. The paragons of the respective concepts were Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri, as it is their writings that one can see with the most precision a clear understanding of both authority itself and the method of drawing legitimacy for it, as well as the goals it ought to pursue”. J. Grzybowski, *Miecz i pastorał: filozoficzny uniwersalizm sporu o charakter władzy: Tomasz z Akwinu i Dante Alighieri*, Kęty 2006, p. 384 et seq.

<sup>5</sup> Those were educated individuals, famed in their lifetime, as well as deeply believing Christians concerned with the welfare of the Church, cognoscenti of political theory and practice, witnesses and active participants in political life, each backed by a potent protector (Thomas had he support of consecutive popes and other ranking hierarchs of the Church; Dante found his protector in the person of Henry VII, who managed, through his Roman coronation in 1312, briefly to reinstate the imperial power 62 years after the death of Frederick II Hohenstaufen). It is necessary to observe the differences between the two. (1) Intellectual formation. Thomas was above all a theologian; his intellectual formation was the product of many years of study in different centres of learning, away from his family parts. Dante might be called an Italian patriot of the time, with his education focusing more on temporal knowledge, his life having passed either in his native Florance or as an ambassador on it on various diplomatic missions. (2) Difference in political attitudes. Thomas voiced pro-Papal ideas; Dante – in the later stages of his life, when he penned *De monarchia* – pro-imperial. (3) Life experience. While Dante might be referred to as a political savant, an expert not only in theory but also in practice, Thomas

gies between the analysed sources speak resoundingly in favour of embarking on a comparison between *De regno* and *De monarchia*. The heart of the matter lies in the differences between the two accounts, given how the two mediaeval thinkers arrived at completely different conclusions in addressing the same question<sup>6</sup>.

### The ultimate goals of humanity

First let us discuss the philosophico-theological aspect of the issue, which can be reduced to the question of the sense of life. Who are we and where are we going? Are temporal happiness and eternal salvation identical or separate destinies? If different, then which one is the more important? Regardless of their mutual relationship, in what ways can each be achieved? Thomas was convinced that God had created the world as an ordered whole, where everything had its proper place and purpose. Another common view in his time was the idea of all elements of creation being headed toward unity, the source, which was the Creator<sup>7</sup>. In Aquinas's opinion, humanity's ultimate goal was ultimate happiness (*ultima beatitudo*), which consisted in the joy of beholding God after death<sup>8</sup>. It was not a goal unto itself but a means of achieving salvation<sup>9</sup>. The ultimate goal was at the same time a perfect end (*finalis perfectio*) and achievement of the fullness of good (*bonum completum*). At the same time, the ultimate goal did not negate temporal goals but

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was first a Benedictine monk, then a Dominican friar, therefore lacking in court perspective and political experience. His primary interest lay with theology and philosophy, hence his knowledge was that of an – exceptional, to be sure – pious scholar.

<sup>6</sup> Let it be said that our intention here is to focus on source text, not on trying to determine – if that is at all possible – whether Thomas and Dante wrote their treatises to an apriorically assumed thesis, or were their writings the fruit of mature and independent reflection on political matters.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. Aveling, *St Thomas Aquinas and the Papal Monarchy*, [in:] *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Mediaeval Thinkers*, ed. F. J. C. Hearnshaw, London 1923, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> *Sed est quoddam bonum extrinsecum homini quamdiu mortaliter vivit, scilicet ultima beatitudo, quae in fruitione Dei expectatur post mortem. De regno, lib. I, cap. XV, 2, 815, p. 274.*

<sup>9</sup> *Sed quia homo vivendo secundum virtutem ad ulteriorem finem ordinatur, qui consistit in fruitione divina, ut supra iam diximus, oportet eundem finem esse multitudinis humanae qui est hominis unius. Non est ergo ultimus finis multitudinis congregatae vivere secundum virtutem, sed per virtuosam vitam pervenire ad fruitionem divinam. Ibid., lib. I, cap. XV, 817, p. 274.*

subsumed them, itself remaining the superior goal, giving order and direction to all inferior human longings. Thomas, through an analogy to mixing metals – if we join silver to gold, the silver will improve; if silver to lead, the opposite result will occur – demonstrated how inanimate matter improved or deteriorated depending on what it was joined with. Following that course, he believed that the human mind – more precious than all terrestrial goods – was headed toward a joining with a higher factor to achieve its proper fullness. The goal of those pursuits was God, the cause of the human mind made in the image of the Creator, the sole being capable of giving man happiness<sup>10</sup>.

Also in Dante's opinion the principle and the cause of all things was their proper ultimate goal. Nature – to be understood as God – created nothing useless. The whole of Creation was orientated toward a goal, constituting at the same time the cause of existence of a thing. Each element of the visible world had its own destined action<sup>11</sup>. For instance, a different tree will be felled for the construction of a house, and a different one for a ship. The Florentine, just as Thomas, was convinced of the existence of a universal goal of all humanity<sup>12</sup>. He explained that just as every finger, palm or arm had its own goal, so differed the proper goals of an individual, family,

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<sup>10</sup> *Adhuc: cuiuslibet rei finalis perfectio et bonum completum ab aliquo superiore dependet, quia et ipsa corporalia meliora redduntur ex adiunctione meliorum, peiora vero, si deterioribus misceantur. Si enim argento misceatur aurum, argentum fit melius, quod ex plumbi admixtione impurum efficitur. Constat autem terrena omnia esse infra mentem humanam. Beatitudo autem est hominis finalis perfectio et bonum completum ad quod omnes pervenire desiderant (podkrešlenie moje). Nihil igitur terrenum est quod hominem possit beatum facere; nec igitur terrenum aliquod est praemium regis sufficiens. (...) Solus igitur Deus est qui hominis desiderium quietare potest, et facere hominem beatum, et esse regi conveniens praemium. Ibid., lib. I, cap. IX, 3, 783, p. 267.*

<sup>11</sup> *Propter quod sciendum primo, quod 'deus et natura nil otiosum facit'; sed quicquid prodit in esse, est ad aliquam operationem. Non enim essentia ulla creata ultimus finis est in intentione creantis, in quantum creans, sed propria essentie operatio. Unde est, quod non operatio propria propter essentiam, sed hec propter illam habet ut sit. De monarchia, lib. I, cap. 3, 15–20, p. 12.*

<sup>12</sup> *Rursus cum in operabilibus principium et causa omnium sit ultimus finis, movet enim primo agentem, consequens est ut omnis ratio eorum que sunt ad finem, ab ipso fine sumatur. Nam alia erit ratio incidendi lignum propter domum construendam, et alia propter navim. Illud igitur, si quid est quod est finis universalis civilitatis humani generis, erit hic principiurn, per quod omnia que inferius probanda sunt, erunt manifesta sufficienter. Esse autem finem huius civilitatis et illius, et non esse unum omnium finem arbitrari stultum est. Ibid., lib. I, cap. 2, 28–38, p. 12.*

city, state and, ultimately, mankind<sup>13</sup>. Both positions are all the more curious considering how to peripatetic philosophy the idea was altogether unknown<sup>14</sup>. Dante, however, understood that goal in a broader way than Thomas did. The goal had to be greater than the sense of existence of each human collective smaller than mankind. Hence he described it as the summit of possibilities that humanity is capable of achieving<sup>15</sup> (*potentia sive virtus intellectiva*), to be permanently ‘actualized’<sup>16</sup>.

How should such ‘potential’ be understood? It is beyond doubt that what Dante had in mind was the entire existing set of knowledge. In the later part, he added that the diversity among people with regard to their occupations and talents, as well as the multitude of communities established by men were the best fit for the continued *actuare* of the entire *potentia intellectiva*, first in the field of theory and then practice. That was a task not to be undertaken by a single man, as no one was capable of learning all things. He added that the multitude and diversity among men was analogous to the necessary multitude in things coming into and going out of existence, as the

<sup>13</sup> *Nunc autem videndum est, quid sit finis totius humane civilitatis. Et ad evidentiam eius quod queritur advertendum, quod quemadmodum est finis aliquis ad quem natura producit pollicem, et alius ab hoc ad quem manum totam, et rursus alius ab utroque ad quem brachium, aliusque ab omnibus ad quem totum hominem, sic alius est finis ad quem singularem hominem, alius ad quem ordinat domesticam comunitatem, alius ad quem viciniam, et alius ad quem civitatem, et alius ad quem regnum, et denique optimus ad quem universaliter genus humanum deus eternus arte sua, que natura est, in esse producit. Et hoc queritur hic tanquam principium inquisitionis directivum. Ibid., lib. I, cap. 3, 1–14, p. 12.*

<sup>14</sup> „As until now, philosophers have indicated the goals of an individual or a group but never yet attempted to propose a single universal goal binding on all men. Dante, by contrast, feels obliged to show a goal to all mankind, which, as we will see, he needs to do in order to prove his thesis about the need for a single, strong monarchical power”. J. Grzybowski, *Miecz i pastorał*, p. 173.

<sup>15</sup> *Est ergo aliqua propria operatio humane universitatis, ad quam ipsa universitas hominum in tanta multitudine ordinatur, ad quam quidem operationem nec homo unus, nec domus una, nec una vicinia, nec una civitas, nec regnum particulare pertingere potest. Que autem sit illa, manifestum fiet, si ultimum de potentia totius humanitatis appareat. De monarchia, lib. I, cap. 3, 20–26, pp. 12 et seq.*

<sup>16</sup> *Patet igitur quod ultimum de potentia ipsius humanitatis est potentia sive virtus intellectiva. Et quia potentia ista per unum hominem, seu per aliquam particularium comunitatum superius distinctarum, tota simul in actum reduci non potest, necesse est multitudinem esse in humano genere, per quam quidem tota potentia hec actuatur. Sicut necesse est multitudinem rerum generabilium, ut potentia tota materie prime semper sub actu sit; aliter esset dare potentiam separatam, quod est impossibile. Ibid., lib. I, cap. 3, 43–50, pp. 13 et seq. Actuo, that is: legitimize, validate, actualize, realize, complete.*

potential of prime matter was constantly renewable<sup>17</sup>. It is hard to decide how one ought to translate that *actuare*. Two answers come to mind, which we could refer to as a 'mediaeval' and a 'modern' option, respectively, on a working basis. The former would mean 'actualization' in the sense of accumulating knowledge – as certain limited and, substantially, already known resource – and passing it on to future generations to avoid it becoming forgotten. Exchange of experience among communities of men would also be of significance here, so that from experience gained in one part of the world other parts could benefit, where such experience has previously remained unknown. In the latter interpretation Dante believed in the possibility of creative development of knowledge, which we would currently define as being – however cliché that might sound – technological progress. The matter cannot be resolved within the limits of this study. Certainly, Dante had in mind fortitude (*virtus*) usable solely in the terrestrial world, hence what he had in mind must have been an ultimate purpose strictly connected with terrestrial life. A relevant – though not controlling – factor could be found in the first sentences of the treatise, wherein Dante explained why he had undertaken the labour of writing. The most important goal of men should be to leave something for the posterity, so that – just as their ancestors did – also the posterity could draw upon the legacy of their ancestors and thereby be enriched<sup>18</sup>. Next, a man thoroughly invested in political writing – probably having himself in mind – ought to make his own contribution to the life of the community<sup>19</sup>. Hence it was Dante's intention to bring profit to the collective through lecturing on matters as of then not yet elaborated on anyone<sup>20</sup>,

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<sup>17</sup> *Satis igitur declaratum est, quod proprium opus humani generis totaliter accepti est actuare semper totam potentiam intellectus possibilis, per prius ad speculandum, et secundo propter hoc ad operandum per suam extensionem.* Ibid., lib. I, cap. 4, 1–4, pp. 14 et seq.

<sup>18</sup> *Omnia hominum quos ad amorem veritatis natura superior impressit, hoc maxime interesse videtur, ut quemadmodum de labore antiquorum ditati sunt, ita et ipsi posteris prolaborent, quatenus ab eis posteritas habeat quo ditetur.* Ibid., lib. I, cap. 1, 1–5, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Longe namque ab officio se esse non dubitet, qui publicis documentis imbutus, ad rem publicam aliquid afferre non curat.* Ibid., lib. I, cap. 1, 5–7, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> „It is striking that Dante was excited by attempting something which he was sure no else had tried to do. This self-confident and deliberate innovation was totally different from the traditionalist arguments from authorities which sought to hide originality (if there were any) under piles of other men's well-tried (and preferably old) intellectual garments”. J. Canning, *Dante Alighieri: the approach of political philosophy*, [in:] idem, *Ideas of power in the late Middle Ages 1296–1417*, Cambridge 2011, p. 63.



not for his own benefit, but so that his talents could bring fruit in accordance with their purpose<sup>21</sup>.

At the conclusion of the work, nearing the end of book three, the scholar included a somewhat different lecture on eschatology. Man, the only being gifted with an immortal soul, was also the only one to participate in the spheres of destructible and indestructible beings<sup>22</sup>. Hence man had a dual nature<sup>23</sup>. If every nature proceeded toward its proper ultimate goal, then man had two such ultimate goals. One he pursued as a destructible being, the other indestructible<sup>24</sup>. The former was temporal happiness, in the form of earthly paradise, achievable by man's own means. The latter was salvation. Men were incapable of achieving it on their own; they needed God's light to guide them<sup>25</sup>. The former happiness was to be pursued through philosophical sciences (*phylosophica documenta*) – presuming that one was following them in practice, after the manner of ancient philosophers – the latter through spiritual powers (*documenta spiritualia*), exceeding the human mind, through the practice of theological virtues (*virtutes theologicas*), that is faith, hope and charity<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> *Hoc igitur sepe mecum recogitans, ne de infossi talenti culpa quandoque redargnar, publice utilitati non modo turgescere, quin imo fructificare desidero, et intemptatas ab aliis ostendere veritates. De monarchia, lib. I, cap. 1, 10–13, pp. 9 et seq.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ad huius autem intelligentiam sciendum quod homo solus in entibus tenet medium corruptibilium et incorruptibilium; propter quod recte a phylosophis assimilatur orizonti, qui est medium duorum emisporiorum. Ibid., lib. III, cap. 16, 10–13, p. 107.*

<sup>23</sup> *Si ergo homo medium quoddam est corruptibilium et incorruptibilium, cum omne medium sapiat naturam extremorum, necesse est hominem sapere utramque naturam. Ibid., lib. III, cap. 16, 21–23, p. 108.*

<sup>24</sup> *Et cum omnis natura ad ultimum quandam finem ordinetur, consequitur ut hominis duplex finis existat, ut sicut inter omnia entia solus incorruptibilitatem et corruptibilitatem participat, sic solus inter omnia entia in duo ultima ordinetur, quorum alterum sit finis eius, prout corruptibilis est, alterum vero, prout incorruptibilis. Ibid., lib. III, cap. 16, 23–29, p. 108.*

<sup>25</sup> *Duos igitur fines providentia illa inenarrabilis homini proposuit intendendos: beatitudinem scilicet huius vite, que in operatione proprie virtutis consistit et per terrestrem paradysum figuratur, et beatitudinem vite eterne, que consistit in fruitione divini aspectus, ad quam propria virtus ascendere non potest, nisi lumine divino adiuta, que per paradysum celestem intelligi datur. Ibid., lib. III, cap. 16, 30–36, p. 108.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ad has quidem beatitudines, velut ad diversas conclusiones, per diversa media venire oportet. Nam ad primam per phylosophica documenta venimus, dummodo illa sequamur, secundum virtutes morales et intellectuales operando. Ad secundam vero per documenta spiritualia que humanam rationem transcendunt, dummodo illa sequamur, secundum virtutes theologicas operando, fidem, spem scilicet et caritatem. Ibid., lib. III, cap. 16, 37–44, p. 108.*

## Whose authority?

The proper sense of the deliberations of both authors was set in politics. The views of both Thomas and Dante had a significant impact on the intellectual debate of the time and served to support specific political outlooks<sup>27</sup>. On their answers depended not only the choice of paths to achieve the end prescribed in the divine plan. The stake was also to determine the rules ordering the life of Christians, and especially its political aspect. What should the relationship be between divine and man-made law? Is the emperor or is the pope to lead humanity in the realization of the latter's tasks? How is one to order the relations between the *regnum* and the *sacerdotium*? In Thomas's view, the exercise of authority in a state – understood as natural necessity, phenomenon desired by God, foreseen in His plans<sup>28</sup> – consisted in leading what was being governed to its proper goal<sup>29</sup>. Writing about the king (*rex*), he had in mind any monarch, regardless of his official title or the size of the state he ruled. He defined him, among others, as the shepherd of the good of the entire commonwealth (*commune multitudinis bonum*), looking after collective and not private benefit<sup>30</sup>. Only such a ruler enjoyed respect among the governed and could govern successfully. It was the best for such rule to

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<sup>27</sup> „In the Middle Ages theology occupies a singular place. This is because it is not only a science, one of the many taught disciplines. Theology for men of that era is wisdom, it is knowing God Himself, man's calling. It is not only a theoretical apex of the description of the 'universum' but also a formula of conduct, a style and manner of life, entering into – as is understandable – the realm of politics. The reason [*ratio*] for which theology was so understood was the ultimate goal of everything – the love of God, identical with salvation. This thesis is the axis of the practical nature of the theology which dared regulate political experience and political solutions. In this manner, political theology is inscribed in the edifice of development of modern man, and its limit is the realization of practical methods of governance”. J. Grzybowski, *Miecz i pastorał*, p. 374.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. W. Piwowarski (Fr.), *Państwo jako społeczność naturalna według św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, Roczniki Nauk Społecznych Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego 22/23 (1994/1995), pp. 11–26.

<sup>29</sup> *Est tamen praeconsiderandum quod gubernare est, id quod gubernatur convenienter ad debitum finem perducere. De regno*, lib. I, cap. XV, 813, pp. 273 et seq.

<sup>30</sup> (...) *unde Dominus per Ezech. dicit: 'Servus meus David rex super omnes erit, et pastor unus erit omnium eorum'* (Ez 37:24). *Ex quo manifeste ostenditur quod de ratione regis est quod sit unus, qui praesit, et quod sit pastor commune multitudinis bonum, et non suum commodum quaerens. Ibid.*, lib. I, cap. II, 748n, p. 259.

be elective, then the ruler's decision carried the largest societal licence<sup>31</sup>. Only the one could be named king who led the subjects on the proper path. The prize for the ruler for the good performance of his duties, in the face of the wretchedness of all temporal goods, was in principle going to be the same as that of any other faithful, which means salvation – unless would add postmortal fame with the posterity<sup>32</sup>. To be king meant a period of the greatest trial for man, where the vessel on the rough sea was no longer the vessel of state but the mind of its ruler. To reign in this world became an onerous experience, giving voice to weakness previously latent or not vexing<sup>33</sup>.

The state was needed by man to create a social framework in which to satisfy man's basic needs and develop, striving for perfect. Next, Thomas returned to the thought that since all was to be headed towards its goal, a suitable guide was necessary on such a path. In life, one can choose among many ways, but only some of them are a worthy object of desire, others lead one astray. Aquinas used the metaphor of a ship, tossed about by waves on the sea, which doubtless was bound to perish, should the helmsman not lead it into the port of salvation<sup>34</sup>. Similarly man on the way to man's goal, ordering the latter's life and actions, also required a guide<sup>35</sup>. That was to be a king,

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<sup>31</sup> „Kingship, in short, is the best type of government; not, now, a kingship appointed, supervised and if necessary censured or deposed by the Church, but an elective kingship, described with an eye to the Aristotelian principle that a mixed constitution is a stable constitution: a kingship moderated and balanced by elements of aristocracy and democracy. It is the best type of government because it is the most natural type, both in terms of its own characteristics and because it is the type best suited to mankind's needs and capacities. There is no suggestion anywhere in St Thomas that secular government is in any sense unnatural or a concomitant of sin, or that the role of a king is merely to impose order on chaos by force". R. W. Dyson, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Aristotelianism and the Redemption of Politics*, [in:] idem, *Normative theories of society and government in five medieval thinkers: St. Augustine, John of Salisbury, Giles of Rome, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Marsilius of Padua*, Lewiston-Lampeter 2003, pp. 204 et seq.

<sup>32</sup> *De regno*, lib. I, cap. IX, 785.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, lib. I, cap. X, 790.

<sup>34</sup> *Principium autem intentionis nostrae hic sumere oportet, ut quid nomine regis intelligendum sit, exponatur. In omnibus autem quae ad finem aliquem ordinantur, in quibus contingit sic et aliter procedure, opus est aliquot dirigente, per quod directe debitum perveniam ad finem. Non enim navis, quam secundum diversorum ventorum impulsus in diversa moveri contingit, ad destinatum finem perveniret nisi per gubernatoris industriam dirigentur ad portum.* *Ibid.*, lib. I, cap. I, 740, p. 257.

<sup>35</sup> *Homini autem est aliquis finis, ad quem tota vita eius et actio ordinatur, cum sit agens per intellectum, cuius est manifeste propter finem operari. Contingit autem diversimode homines*

guaranteeing salvation (in this meaning) to his subjects. Being so saved by the ruler consisted in an assurance of indivisible peace<sup>36</sup>.

Is it better for one to rule, or for many? Aquinas replied that since a ship was guided by only one helmsman responsible for its fate, it was better for a monarch to rule the state. The subjects ought to unite around the monarch, avoiding the chaos and decision-making impasse characteristic of when many members of the community are claiming the right to decide its fate<sup>37</sup>. Thomas also argued for the superiority of monarchy in a different way. Were man to lead a solitary life, akin to many animals, man would not need a guide, being subordinate only to God<sup>38</sup>. However, men were predestined to live in society<sup>39</sup>. Next, Thomas, with the aid of an intellectual argument – someone had to lead the community and give it direction, as in the contrary case

*ad finem intetum procedere, quod ipsa diversitas humanorum studiorum et actionum declarat. Indiget igitur homo aliquot dirigente ad finem. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 740, p. 257.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ad hoc enim cuiuslibet regentis ferri debet intentio, ut eius quod regendum suscepit salutem procuret. Gubernatoris enim est, navem contra maris pericula servando, illaesam perducere ad portum salutis. Bonum autem et salus consociatae multitudinis est ut eius unitas conservetur, quae dicitur pax, qua remota, socialis vitae perit sibi ipsi sit onerosa. Hoc igitur est ad quod maxime rector multitudinis intendere debet, ut pacis unitatem procuret. Nec recte consiliatur, an pacem faciat in multitudine sibi subiecta, sicut medicus, an sanet infirmum sibi commissum. Nullus enim consiliari debet de fine quem intendere debet, sed de his quae sunt ad finem. Propterea Apostolus commendata Fidelis populi unitate: 'Sollicit (...) sitis servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis' (Eph 4:3). Quando igitur regimen efficacius fuerit ad unitatem pacis servandam, tanto erit utilius. Ibid., lib. I, cap. III, 750, p. 259.*

<sup>37</sup> *Hoc enim utilius dicimus, quod magis perducit ad finem. Manifestum est autem quod unitatem magis efficere potest quod est per se unum, quam plures. Sicut efficacissima causa est calefactionis quod est per se calidum. Utilius igitur est regimen unius, quam plurimum. Amplius, manifestum est quod plures multitudinem Nullo modo conservant, si omnino dissentirent. Requiritur enim in pluribus quaedam unio ad hoc, quod quoquo modo regere possint: quia nec multi navem in unam partem traherent, nisi aliquo modo coniuncti. Uniri autem dicuntur plura per appropinquationem ad unum. Melius igitur regit unus quam plures ex eo quod appropinquant ad unum. Ibid., lib. I, cap. III, 750n, p. 259.*

<sup>38</sup> *Et autem unicuique hominum naturaliter insitum rationis lumen, quo in suis actibus dirigatur ad finem. Et si quidem conveniret singulariter vivere, sicut multis animalium, nullo 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. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 741, p. 257.*

<sup>39</sup> *Naturale autem est homini ut sit animal sociale et politicum, in multitudine vivens, magis etiam quam omnia alia animalia, quod quidem naturalis necessitas declarat. Aliis enim animalibus natura praeparavit cibum, tegumenta pilorum, defensionem, ut dentes, cornua, ungues, vel saltem velocitatem ad fugam. Homo autem institutus est nullo horum sibi a natura praeparato, sed loco omnium data est ei ratio, per quam sibi haec omnia officio manuum*

everyone would only look to his own good at the expense of common good<sup>40</sup> – and a biblical one – invoking the words of Salomon from Proverbs that people without a leader would fall<sup>41</sup> – as well as a macro- and micro- and macrocism metaphor, where, just as in the universe some celestial bodies ruled others, so did the soul govern the body, and in the body itself always one part of it, either the heart or the head, leads and activates the rest – inferred that the most appropriate leader for the commonwealth was the king<sup>42</sup>. Dante was in agreement with Thomas in the latter's recognition of monarchy. He argued that just as the world was directed and moved by God – which he deemed to be a manifest truth, accessible thanks to the achievements of philosophy – so was humanity best governed when led by one ruler and one legal order. Hence the need for the existence of Monarchy, that is monocratism – concerned with affairs common to everyone, such as peace – referred to as the Empire, in order to ensure prosperity for the world<sup>43</sup>. The Florentine finished the first book of *De monarchia* with a call for unity of humanity, bearing innumerable sufferings in consequence of its fragmentation<sup>44</sup>.

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*posset praeparanda unus homo non sufficit. Nam unus homo per se sufficienter vitam transigere non posset. Est igitur homini naturale quod in societate multorum vivat. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 741, p. 257.*

<sup>40</sup> *Si ergo naturale est homini quod in societate multorum vivat, necesse est in hominibus esse per quod multitudo regatur. 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 pertinent curam habens; sicut et corpus hominis et cuiuslibet animalis deflueret, nisi esset aliqua vis regitiva communis in corpore, quae ad bonum commune omnium membrorum intenderet. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 744, p. 258.*

<sup>41</sup> *Quod considerans Salomon dicit: 'Ubi non est gubernator, dissipabitur populus' (Pro 2:14). Hoc autem rationabiliter accidit: non enim idem est quod proprium et quod commune. Secundum propria quidem different, secundum autem commune uniuntur. Diversorum autem diversae sunt causae. Oportet igitur, praeter id quod movet ad proprium bonum uniuscuique, esse aliquid quod movet ad bonum commune multorum. Propter quod et in omnibus quae in unum ordinantur, aliquid invenitur alterius regitivum. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 744n, p. 258.*

<sup>42</sup> *In universitate enim corporum per primum corpus, scilicet caeleste, alia corpora ordine quodam divinae Providentiae reguntur, omniaque corpora per creaturam rationalem. In uno etiam homine anima regit corpus, atque inter animae partes irascibili et concupiscibilis ratione reguntur. Itemque inter membra corporis unum est principale, quod omnia movet, ut cor, aut caput. Oportet igitur esse in omni multitudine aliquod regitivum. Ibid., lib. I, cap. I, 745, p. 258.*

<sup>43</sup> *De monarchia, lib. I, cap. 9, 7–16, p. 20n.*

<sup>44</sup> *O genus humanum quantis procellis atque iacturis, quantisque naufragiis agitari te necesse est, dum bellua multorum capitum factum in diversa conaris. Ibid., lib. I, cap. 16, 17–20, p. 36.*

Authority was not to preoccupy itself with the provision of necessary goods for humanity but to organize forms of co-operation among men. Aquinas sustained the concept of dualism of the higher natural law and the lower human law, subordinate to natural law, also according the state its own sphere of activity and its own goals<sup>45</sup>. On the one hand, it resulted in more emphasis on the division of powers<sup>46</sup>. However, such dualism did not entail independence of secular authority from the pope<sup>47</sup>. In Thomas's opinion, authority was the higher, the more it led to a higher goal<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas's theory diverged significantly from traditional notions of the genesis of the state. The state was no longer merely the consequence of sin or tool of punishment. It also had its positive, natural goals to achieve. In consequence, connection between the fall of the state and man's fall in consequence of the original sin was rejected. Cf. P. Buc, *Principes gentium dominantur eorum: Princely Power Between Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Twelfth-Century Exegesis*, [in:] *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. T. N. Bisson, Philadelphia 1995, pp. 310–328.

<sup>46</sup> „St. Thomas's theory of state contains in comparison to his master Aristotle a significant 'novum'. (...) Ordination of the political community – the state – to extratemporal goals is characteristic of Christian thinkers of previous eras and Thomas's own time. He characterized the state, however, as an autotelic community (clear influence from Aristotle), of which the main task is to ensure the happiness of its members through maintenance of order, satisfaction of their various needs, achievement of justice. Though this goal is hierarchically inferior and subordinate to the ultimate goal (salvation) – as everything which is temporal – it has its own autonomy. Furthermore, the role of state as an organizer of life in the ethical aspect in reference to the ultimate goal equips the state with significant rank and value. (...) It is also for this reason that the relationship between the state and the Church is understood as one of autonomy and at the same time indirect subordination to the Church by reason of the ultimate goal”. M. Kuniński, *W poszukiwaniu idealnego ustroju*, [in:] *Państwo jako wyzwanie*, ed. A. Rzegocki, Kraków 2000, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> „Thomas's understanding of the proper relationship between the church and the state was based ultimately on his understanding of the hierarchy among human ends. For Aquinas humanity has both a natural and a supernatural goal. Thus the superiority of the supernatural over the natural implied the superiority of the church over the state. Yet inasmuch as the supernatural does not negate but rather supplements the order of nature, the church had no reason to interfere with the state as long as the temporal government exercised its own proper functions correctly. As a consequence the church's political authority was understood to operate indirectly, an church sovereignty was thereby delegated to the officers of the state”. J. L. Wisner, *Thomas Aquinas and Medieval Christianity*, [in:] idem, *Political Philosophy – A History of the Search for Order*, Englewood Cliffs 1983, p. 122.

<sup>48</sup> „Kingship and priesthood originate from two sources, namely from nature and Revelation, which, in turn, take their origin from the divine reason. Authority, therefore, is assigned in two ways, direct and indirect, each of which creates authority of a different kind. Since each of the two circles of authority derives from a separate source and has

The duality of human nature and human goals supplied Dante with foundation for his thesis of a twofold road sign: the supreme pontiff – the pope leading humanity to life everlasting through the force of revealed truths – and the emperor, leading men to earthly happiness through philosophical truths<sup>49</sup>. In his opinion, human kind was not to know peace as long as subordination to the emperor was not achieved, to that universal ruler whose prime goal was to ensure the peaceful co-existence of his subjects<sup>50</sup>. In the contrary case, no-one or very few, and only after many trials, would reach their destined happiness in the temporal world. Dante finished his work with the assertion that the emperor had received his authority directly from God<sup>51</sup>. The Florentine reserved that this was not to be understood too rigorously, as though the emperor were not in anything at all subordinate to the pope. All the more so considering that – also in Dante’s opinion – happiness in temporal life should be subordinate in some degree to eternal happiness. Hence the emperor owed deference to the pope, as though a son to a father, so that the former, resplendent in the brightness of papal grace, could all the better fulfil his glorious mission<sup>52</sup>. That deference would consist in the superiority of the ultimate goal over the temporal goal, despite the fact that – as Dante had earlier on been inferring – the empire was older than the Church and papacy. One of the causes behind such an understanding of eschatology and politics was, with Dante, a transplantation of the ideas of Averroism

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separate properties, they cannot intersect; they do, however, derive from the same divine reason, hence they are co-ordinated and connected by a necessary bond. This is because the commandments of natural virtue may also be observed in the lack of Revelation, but they are not sufficient for salvation; on the other hand, merits of grace can be gained only when one has fulfilled all of the obligations of nature”. M. Scattola, *Teologia polityczna*, transl. Paweł Borkowski, Warsaw 2011, p. 77.

<sup>49</sup> *Propter quod opus fuit homini duplici directivo secundum duplicem finem scilicet summo pontifice, qui secundum revelata humanum genus perduceret ad vitam eternam, et imperatore, qui secundum philosophica documenta genus humanum ad temporalem felicitatem dirigeret. De monarchia*, lib. III, cap. 16, 52–56, p. 109.

<sup>50</sup> *Et cum ad hunc portum vel nulli vel pauci et hii cum difficultate nimia pervenire possint, nisi sedatis fluctibus blande cupiditatis, genus humanum liberum in pacis tranquillitate quiescat, hoc est illud signum ad quod maxime debet intendere curator orbis, qui dicitur romanus princeps, ut scilicet in areola ista mortalium libere cum pace vivatur. Ibid.*, lib. III, cap. 16, 56–62, p. 109.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, lib. III, cap. 16, 6–44.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, lib. III, cap. 16, 78–96.

onto political grounds<sup>53</sup>. The consequence was the mutual independence of reason and faith, and state and Church. On the other hand, in emancipating philosophy from the influence of theology – and hence the state, derived in a natural way (implicitly: contained in the divine plan) from the tutelage of the Church – Dante did not challenge the divine origin of the state.

## Conclusions

The analysed treatises do not only contain ideological projects, connected with the area of political practice. They also ponder authority as such, its origin, foundations and goals. A significant category in the deliberations of both authors was the assurance of peace in order to ensure prosperous growth for the commonwealth. A fundamental issue for both Thomas and Dante was the prevention of conflicts tearing the polity apart into antagonized parties. The internal struggles constituted an invitation for external forces to interfere with the life of such a conflicted collective. On the other hand, within the confines of a specific country, they linked the assurance of peaceful co-existence with a model of relations in which the sovereign governed according to the principle of a contract with the governed, without regarding the state as his own private property or putting his dynastic interests above the welfare of the subjects and the unity of the state. The starting point for the reflections of both authors was the ultimate goals of humanity. In principle, those were happiness in earthly life and salvation after death. Where Dante agreed with Thomas is the conviction that science and faith, the state and the Church – although mutually independent in temporal life<sup>54</sup> – would meet each other in the world to come, before the face of

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. J. Grzybowski, *Miecz i pastorał*, pp. 183 et seq.

<sup>54</sup> „The capacity of human nature to know good from evil, and the desire to make sure that the former prevails, require the collective life to become organized, of which the culmination becomes the state. The secular institution so understood came into contact with the Church. To delimit their scopes of activities and spheres of influence became a necessity. And in this area Dante showed a lot of originality. As we know – the foundation on which he builds the mutual relationship of both authorities is their mutual independence. (...) As the state, according to Dante, is governed by its own laws, and because it is supposed to be independent from the influence of the Church, hence secular philosophy and theology also should be separate, as otherwise the mutual independence of the state and the Church would become fiction: the pope, through theologians, would



the Supreme Judge. Also that the genesis of the state, its ideological foundations, are evaluated in a positive light. It is only a secondary issue – though obviously still a very important one – how polities are governed. Thomas and Dante both emphasized the destination of mankind to live in society. In their opinion, all communities – including the state – followed from human nature, identified with reason, that, in turn, being a reflection of divine wisdom. Polities were therefore an inseparable element of the world brought about by the will of the Creator.

Different, however, were their conclusions concerning the relationship between the two destinies: parallel, identical and inseparable in Thomas, and autonomous, separate and irreducible in Dante. Thomas asserted that, since the goal of every man was salvation, temporal life was to be subjected to it. In his view the road to salvation was the Church, with the pope at its helm. In Dante's opinion, man, on account of the latter's dual nature – the mortal and the immortal – had two goals: temporal happiness and salvation after death. The achievement of both of those destinies required peace in the terrestrial world, which could be ensured only by a universal monarch (emperor), exercising authority received directly from God. The originality of Dante's thought expressed itself in the ideal of autonomy – and not of subordination or supremacy – of the temporal order with regard to the supernatural. Hence he inferred the independence of the secular from the temporal authority. He proposed an order in which the emperor would play the same role that the pope filled in the Church. He relied on the ideal of the Roman Empire to demonstrate a projected temporal community, understood in a strictly political way and encompassing the whole of mankind.<sup>55</sup> He deemed the temporal and the eternal goal of humanity to be in

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influence secular government. (...) Dante's recognition of the mutual independence of the two institutions was dictated by his recognition of the dual goal of man (...). As the supernatural goal is more valuable than the earthly goal, also in the hierarchy of moral values does the Church stand higher than the empire; hence the emperor owes deference to the pope. It does not follow from this hierarchy of goals that the practical operation of the two institutions should be subordinate to one another. On the contrary, each of them is free to act within its own scope, on which our poet puts especial emphasis". K. Morawski, *Dante Alighieri*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 221 et seq.

<sup>55</sup> „First, he [Dante] extended the concept of the individual citizen and collectivised it on the largest possible scale. The result was the Dantesque 'humana civilitas'. Second, he utilized the historical notion of the Roman empire (and hence of the Roman emperor) as an operational instrument with the help of which universal peace and justice were to be

some ways equally matched in temporal life, albeit the eternal remained the higher goal. The earthly life should be subjected to a universal monarch, and, specifically, philosophers<sup>56</sup> – in the area of reason – and the monarch – in the area of will – who, although unable to influence the laws discovered by science, ought to learn them thanks to philosophers and apply in action. Some attention is drawn also to the Florentine's thought about the potential, the illective power of humanity, an intriguing through, vividly reminiscent of ideas that came into existence only in later centuries and today enjoy universal recognition.

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achieved. His programmatic declarations rested on the ideological rebirth of the Roman empire and the humanistic, above all the basically religious idea and the theological concept of the "renovatio hominis". In the application of these religious topics to the solution of the contemporary crisis of mundane society and government lies the profound contribution of Dante". W. Ullmann, *Dante's 'Monarchia' as an illustration of a politico-religious 'renovatio'*, [in:] idem, *Scholarship and politics in the Middle Ages: collected studies*, London 1978, p. 105. Cf. E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1997 (chapter VIII: *Man-Centered Kingship: Dante*).

<sup>56</sup> „Still, beside the 'auctoritas' of the emperor there appears in Dante's vision a separate and independent 'auctoritas' of the philosopher, the limits of which may not be violated even by the imperial power. This is because even though the emperor has total freedom in the direction of any actions taken by men out of their own will, through subordinating them to the emperor's law, that does not mean at all the emperor can pretend to dominion over free philosophical reflection; on the contrary, the emperor himself should subject his authority to the principles of philosophy. It is in this way that in the Pope's province there remained the leadership of the spiritual voyage of men, while the 'emperor' and the 'philosopher' divided between themselves all 'elements' of their natural life, establishing – each in his own proper scope – an indisputable autonomy of the terrestrial order". C. Vasoli, *Filozofia i teologia w dziełach Dantego*, [in:] idem, *Mysł Dantego: cztery studia*, transl. Piotr Salwa, Warszawa 1998, p. 18. „From the dual goal of man (...) there remain three orders of virtues. Supernatural happiness is guaranteed by the immortal soul. In the temporal order, on the other hand, animated by the collaboration of the intellect and will, man seeks intellectual and moral virtues, while will finds expression in civil law". T. Żyro, *Wola polityczna: siedem prób z filozofii praktycznej*, Warszawa 2008, p. 160.

### **Identical or Autonomous? The Final Goals of Humanity in St. Thomas' Aquinas *De regno* and Dante Alighieris' *De monarchia***

This study reflects on questions of a beginning and an end in the view of St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri. Critical and comparative analysis will show: (1) in what ways the authors perceived the ultimate goals of humanity; and (2) what impact doing so had on their political outlooks. In both cases treatises came to life with two purposes: the declared (theoretical) purpose – discussion of how to organize a well-functioning state – and actual (practical) – resolution of the dispute between the *regnum* and the *sacerdotium*, that is, determination of which party deserves precedence. The heart of the matter lies in the differences between the two accounts, given how the two mediaeval thinkers arrived at completely different conclusions in addressing the same question.

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