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HENRY OF GHENT ON THE SIEGE OF ACRE: MAGNANIMITY, SUICIDE AND THE ROLE OF GOD*

Mikko POSTI

Abstract

This article deals with some key ideas found in Henry of Ghent's *Quodlibet XV*, question 16, which is concerned with the actions of a Christian knight during the siege of Acre that took place in 1291. In answering the question of whether the soldier acted magnanimously on the battlefield, Henry provides a rich discussion of magnanimity and the ethics of suicide. Despite his status as one of the leading minds of the later 13th century, Henry's ideas on magnanimity have received little attention in previous scholarship. On my reading, Henry's understanding of magnanimity is reminiscent of the Christian view of magnanimity before the assimilation of Aristotle into the university curriculum. Furthermore, Henry allows God's causality a more central role in his discussion of warfare than most 13th-century theologians and canon lawyers.

1. *Introduction*

Recent years have seen a number of high quality publications in historical scholarship concerning the ideas of medieval thinkers on war and its ethics.¹ In the medieval universities, numerous theologians and canon lawyers discussed ethical questions regarding the justification of war (*ius ad bellum*) and proper behavior on the battlefield (*ius in bello*). Such questions are not typically found in the commentaries on the standard theological textbook of the era, the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.² Rather, the topic of war was usually treated in separate treatises, such as the so-called mirrors for princes literature, or within quodlibetal questions.

In this article, I will analyse Henry of Ghent's writings on war and violence. Henry's quodlibetal questions constitute a relatively well-known and well-studied source of the philosophical and theological thinking of one of the leading minds of the latter half of the thirteenth century.³

* I am indebted for the helpful comments of numerous colleagues provided during several phases of writing this article. In particular, I wish to offer my thanks to Simo Knuutila, Virpi Mäkinen, Johan Olsthoorn, and Ritva Palmén.

¹ See for example, G. M. REICHBURG, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, Cambridge 2017 and R. COX, *John Wyclif on War and Peace*, Woodbridge 2014.

² Peter Lombard himself had nothing to say on the phenomenon of war. The silence of Lombard on some given topic did not often stop his commentators from discussing the topic in question. At any rate, the topic of just war was not usually discussed in commentaries on the *Sentences*.

³ A critical edition of Henry's *opera omnia* has been in the works since 1977. A number of Henry's quodlibets have not yet appeared in this series. For recent general introductions to Henry's thinking, see, e.g., P. PORRO, "Henry of Ghent," in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), ed. E. N. ZALTA, URL

Several scholars have focused on various aspects of Henry's multifaceted thinking in recent years. There has been little previous scholarship on Henry's ideas on war, however. In this article, I will focus on Henry's *Quodlibet XV*, question 16: "Whether a soldier who rushes alone into the army of the enemies commits a magnanimous act." In this text, Henry deals with a range of interesting issues regarding the ethics of war and proper conduct in battle.⁴ The question is notable for two reasons. First, it is the final quodlibetal question that Henry composed and therefore offers an insight into Henry's most mature thought. Second, it is a question concerned with an interesting and urgent political situation. A reader familiar with medieval quodlibetal literature will recognize that the treatment of such political notions is not uncommon within the genre. When it comes to the particular subject matter of the question, the ethics of war, however, it is quite rare to see a theologian offering a commentary on a contemporary event, as Frederick Russell has noted in his seminal study *The Just War in the Middle Ages*.⁵ The treatments of war written by theologians were rarely concerned with actual contemporary events and tended to focus on more general questions, such as the conditions in which a war can be considered just, or who has the legal authority to start a war. While the immediate question Henry asks is concerned with an appraisal of the action of one particular soldier, he also touches on a number of other philosophically and theologically relevant questions. The three themes that I wish to focus on are (1) Henry's treatment of the virtue of magnanimity, (2) his discussion of suicide related to the soldier's conduct, and (3) Henry's view on the relationship between God's providential governance and war. I will discuss each of these topics below. First, however, I will provide some background information regarding the historical context of the crusader city of Acre, which is at the heart of Henry's text, and offer a summary of Henry's discussion of the Christian soldier who met his death in the city.

<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/henry-ghent/>>, and G. A. WILSON (ed.), *A Companion to Henry of Ghent*, Leiden/Boston 2011. A selection of Henry's quodlibetal questions has been translated in R. J. TESKE (transl.), *Quodlibetal Questions on Moral Problems*, Milwaukee Wis. 2005.

⁴ In addition to *Quodlibet XV*, question 16, I will also make use of a few others of Henry's quodlibetal questions. For example, in *Quodlibet IX*, question 26, Henry asks "Whether one condemned to death can licitly flee." In *Quodlibet XV*, question 16, Henry discusses the closely related question of the circumstances under which fleeing from war is permissible, at length. HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, ed. G. ETZKORN – G. WILSON, Leuven 2007, pp. 154-181. An English translation of the question can be found in TESKE (transl.), *Quodlibetal Questions*, pp. 57-77. R. MACKEN, "Henry of Ghent as Defender of Human Heroism," in: *Mediaevalia* 3 (1993), pp. 44-54 does a fine job explaining the content of Henry's *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16 to a non-specialist audience. In this article, my aim is to look deeper into some specific philosophical and theological themes that Macken does not discuss. While acknowledging the value of Macken's contribution, I believe that understanding Henry's ideas on magnanimity, for example, requires placing Henry in the broader intellectual context that he worked in.

⁵ F. H. RUSSELL, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge / New York 1975, pp. 234 and 240-241. Russell's monograph is an exception to the rule, discussing Henry's ideas on war at some length; see esp. pp. 215, 221, 248 and 250-251.

2. Historical background

The historical setting of Henry's text is Acre, a crusader city located 150 kilometers north of Jerusalem. Acre was an important port city during the first Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (1104–1187) that fell into the hands of sultan Saladin in 1187 and remained in Muslim control for four years until 1191. The second Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem lasted for a century from 1191 until 1291. The Crusader Kingdom had already been weakened in the aftermath of the military disasters of the 7th and 8th crusades and a civil war in the late 1270s. It finally fell during the siege of Acre in 1291. The Mamluk sultan Qalawun found a pretext to ignore a recently signed truce between the Crusaders and Mamluks after a loosely organized army consisting of Italian peasants had killed Muslim merchants and peasants in the region. Sultan Qalawun died, and was succeeded by his son Khalil shortly after mobilizing his armies from Egypt to capture Acre. The actual siege was taken over by Khalil in 1291 and lasted from April to May in 1291. The strength of the Christian army in Acre was some 17,000 soldiers. While there are no accurate numbers available for the Mamluk army, there is no doubt that it must have been much larger than the army in Acre. After the fall of Acre, most remaining cities held by the Crusaders in the Holy Land fell within the same year.⁶

Several contemporary accounts of the siege have survived. An important eyewitness account from the so-called Templar of Tyre, a knight born in Cyprus, is among the most important sources for these events. The Templar of Tyre was secretary to the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, William of Beajeu, and stresses how William did everything in his power to prevent a violent confrontation between the Christian people and the Mamluk army, but was ultimately ignored by the city council of Acre. William was woken from his sleep as the soldiers of Khalil attacked before dawn. He was fatally wounded by a javelin and lost his life later in the day.⁷ Although the Templar of Tyre's account of William of Beajeu's last day offers some loose parallelism with Henry of Ghent's account of the Christian soldier – they are both commanders of other soldiers, are both awakened from sleep, and are killed shortly afterwards – there is no particular reason to presume that the protagonist of Henry's question is William of Beajeu. It does remain a possibility that the story reported to Henry

⁶ A. FALK, *Franks and Saracens. Reality and Fantasy in the Crusades*, London 2010, pp. 195-198.

⁷ P. F. CRAWFORD, "Did the Templars Lose the Holy Land? The Military Orders and the Defense of Acre, 1291," in: J. FRANCE (ed.), *Acre and Its Falls*, Leiden / Boston 2018, pp. 106-107 and 111-112. Crawford also considers the treatments of the fall of Acre written by Thaddeus of Naples and the anonymous author of *Excidium Acconis*. For a translation of the Templar of Tyre's account of the Siege of Acre, see *The 'Templar of Tyre': Part III of the 'Deeds of the Cypriots'*, transl. P. CRAWFORD, Aldershot / Burlington 2003, pp. 96-120.

had been an oral re-telling of the fate of the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, but unfortunately the slight textual evidence does not allow for anything more than pure speculation.

Another account of the siege is provided by the German pilgrim Ludolph von Sudheim, who visited the ruins of Acre between 1336 and 1341. Ludolph paints a vivid picture of the events that led to the siege and the actual battles. He recounts hundreds of thousands of warriors who died on both sides and describes how the four elements helped the Mamluk army in obtaining victory over the sinful people of Acre. Other aspects of Ludolph's report, however, including his description of the Saracens breaking the terms of a surrender, have been considered reliable.⁸ Paul Crawford notes that with the passing of time, the reports started to become more fictitious and fantastical in nature.⁹

Henry of Ghent's question is concerned with an event that took place in these historical circumstances at the siege of Acre led by Sultan Khalil in May 1291. Henry's text can be dated quite accurately. He mentions Nicholas IV, who died on April 4, 1292, as being alive. This demonstrates that the question must have been written between May 1291 and April 1292.¹⁰ Although Henry was obviously not an eyewitness to the events of the siege, his account was nevertheless composed quite shortly after the actual events. I will next turn to the report offered by Henry regarding the events that took place on the battlefield and inspired the philosophical discussion.

3. *The battlefield*

In the body of the question *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, Henry explains the circumstances that elicited the question. A Christian soldier has woken up before the dawn to sounds of battle. The soldier rushes towards the sound and is joined by a couple of his comrades on the way. When he reaches the battlefield, it turns out that the enemy troops far outnumber the Christian soldiers.¹¹ Without taking much time to consider, the protagonist attacks the enemy on his own and is quickly killed by the Mamluk warriors. The protagonist of the question, the Christian soldier, is not named but referred to as *miles noster*. While Henry's account cannot be explicitly verified by other surviving sources, there is no particular reason to doubt the historicity of the account. The first part of the question is

⁸ A. J. BOAS & G. P. MELLONI, "New Evidence for Identifying the Site of the Teutonic Compound in Acre," in: J. FRANCE (ed.), *Acre and Its Falls*, pp. 72-73 & P. F. CRAWFORD, "Military Orders," p. 112.

⁹ P. F. CRAWFORD, "Military Orders," p. 114.

¹⁰ P. PORRO, "Doing Theology (and Philosophy) in the First Person: Henry of Ghent's *Quodlibeta*," in: C. SCHABEL (ed.), *Theological Quodlibeta in the Middle Ages: The Thirteenth Century*, Boston 2006, pp. 171-231, esp. 209; P. F. CRAWFORD, "Military Orders," pp. 106-107 and 111-112.

¹¹ On the use of surprise in medieval warfare, see D. WHETHAM, *Just Wars and Moral Victories. Surprise, Deception and the Normative Framework of European War in the Later Middle Ages*, Leiden 2009. Henry does not pay particular attention to the fact that the Saracens attacked Acre by means of surprise. Given that the Saracens were, in Henry's understanding, waging an unjust war, there was little need to judge the morality of this particular strategic choice.

concerned with the events that took place in Acre and shows how the virtue of magnanimity, as defined by Aristotle, applies to the actions of the soldier. The second part of the question asks when it is permissible for Christians to flee a battle. In addition to Aristotle, Henry employs a range of other ancient sources in his analysis. Augustine and Cicero are his main sources on the topic of just war. On more practical issues concerning warfare, Henry cites Vegetius, a fourth-century Roman author.¹²

At the beginning of his question, Henry offers some remarks regarding just war theory, which is a theory of the circumstances under which waging war can be considered morally justified. According to Raymond Macken, Henry formulates his theory of just war in question 16.¹³ While it is true that this is the most extended discussion Henry offers on the topic, it is rather an over-statement to speak of the formulation of an original theory. After all, Henry says little that is not entirely standard and based on quotations from Augustine and Cicero. The views Henry expresses on just war contain little that is particularly original or differs substantially from the generality of other thirteenth-century theologians.

Central to Henry's discussion is the fact that the enemies of the Christian army at the Siege of Acre discussion were Muslims (i.e., Saracens in medieval terminology). Muslims were sometimes regarded as a sect of Christian heretics, and sometimes as practitioners of a separate, albeit untrue, religion by the medieval theologians.¹⁴ The Christian authors had a different set of principles for warfare against Christians and heretics. This is clearly demonstrated by the principle that while the

¹² Despite being rather less known today, Vegetius was widely read in the Middle Ages. Henry cites his best-known surviving work, *De re militari*, which was quite popular in the Middle Ages. In addition to Henry, Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome, for example, cite Vegetius in their treatments of war. Allmand writes that *De re militari* was not based on firsthand knowledge of military matters. It was probably not seen as very insightful or innovative in its own historical context. Nevertheless, for the medieval authors it was one of the main sources for the ancient Roman art of warfare. C. T. ALLMAND, *The De re militari of Vegetius. The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge; New York 2011, pp. 2-3. Thomas refers to Vegetius's terminology of warlike exercises as "*meditationes armorum, vel bella sine sanguine*" in *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 40 a. 1, ad 1, although he incorrectly believes he quotes an epistle of Jerome.

¹³ R. MACKEN, "Human Heroism," p. 28. To an extent, the same can be said of Aquinas's theory of just war. The main influence of Aquinas for the subsequent generations of just war theorizing was to summarize the earlier (largely Augustinian) insights in a compact and easily accessible form. On Henry's views on just war, see also M. LEONE, *Filosofia e teologia della vita attiva. La sfera dell'agire pratico in Enrico di Gand*, Bari 2014, pp. 267-272.

¹⁴ In a brief quodlibetal question, *Quodlibet I*, question 23, Henry writes that in case of death, the unbaptized children of Christian parents receive the same punishment as the children of Muslims. Since the children would lack the divine vision equally, their punishment would also be equal. HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet I*, q. 23, ed. R. MACKEN, Leiden 1979, p. 176. On medieval ideas on heresy, see, e.g., J. M. M. H. THUSSEN, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200-1400*, Pennsylvania 2011; G. LEFF, *Heresy, Philosophy and Religion in the Medieval West*, Aldershot 2002. On medieval views of Islam, see especially the contributions of Frassetto and Tolan, in: M. FRASSETTO – M. BLANKS (eds.), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, New York 1999, and M. M. TISCHLER, "Lex Mahometi. Die Erfolgsgeschichte eines vergleichenden Konzepts der christlichen Religionspolemik," in: A. SPEER – G. GULDENTOPS (eds.), *Das Gesetz – The Law – La Loi* (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 38), Berlin 2014, pp. 527-573.

use of crossbow was (at least in principle) forbidden in wars between Christians, its use was seen as licit in crusades and battles against heretics.¹⁵

Traditionally, the Western just war theorists emphasized three criteria that each had to be met for a particular war to be just. These criteria are proper authority, just cause, and correct intention. A treatment of these three criteria constitutes the core of Thomas Aquinas's reply to the question of whether it is sinful to wage war in the *Secunda secundae* of *Summa theologiae*, for example.¹⁶ While Henry does not invoke these criteria explicitly, his remarks on the topic allow the reader to form a picture of how Henry applied the three criteria to the case under discussion.

Henry does not explicitly discuss the criterion of proper authority. The most likely explanation for this lies in the context of the question. He considered it obvious that defending the Christian city of Acre against infidel invaders was approved by both the temporal and the spiritual rulers. Even the crusades, many of which now appear as offenses undertaken by Christians, were widely considered defensive wars by the medieval authors.¹⁷ On the criterion of just cause, Henry echoes the majority of medieval theologians. He quotes Augustine's well-known letter addressed to Boniface to the effect that a war may be just only if it is fought in order to obtain peace. Since the Saracens had unlawfully attacked Acre, a defensive war aiming to repel the attackers clearly satisfies this criterion of just war. An attempt to prevent the enemy from injuring such goods as life, liberty, laws, and faith constitutes a just cause for war. Finally, when it comes to correct intention, Henry stresses this criterion in his analysis of whether the soldier had acted magnanimously. If the courage of this soldier was based on an intention to protect the Christian faith and his *patria*, his action was magnanimous and laudable.¹⁸ Henry's treatment shows no trace of idealization of the non-violence or pacifism that first appeared in a more theoretical form in fourteenth-century authors such as John Wyclif.¹⁹ On the contrary,

¹⁵ F. H. RUSSELL, *The Just War*, p. 156. The twelfth-century Parisian theologian Peter the Chanter went as far as to claim that crossbowmen are unworthy of salvation, because they had made killing their innocent victims their profession (see RUSSELL, *The Just War*, p. 243). The conceptual connection between heresy and warfare had already been established in the works of Augustine, who mainly discussed the ethics of war in the context of extirpating the heresies of his own time (see J. D. TOOKE, *The Just War in Aquinas and Grotius*, London 1965, pp. 10-12). This conception was inherited by the Middle Ages and can be clearly seen in the canon law treatments of just war. In Henry's discussion too, it is noteworthy that the enemies in the battle in question are Muslims.

¹⁶ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 40 a. 1, resp. Although Aquinas's treatment consists entirely of traditional elements, his influence on later discussions on just war was enormous. For later authors, Aquinas provided a summary of the multifaceted discussions starting with Augustine and leading to the medieval canon lawyers.

¹⁷ The decretist Huguccio (d. 1210), for example, held that the Holy Land was territory that obviously belonged to the Christians. Therefore, expelling infidels from the holy war by means of war was justified. See F. H. RUSSELL, *The Just War*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁸ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, pp. 161-162: "Quod si ita fuerit, quia tunc tempus necessitasque postulabant decertandum esse manu et mortem servituti turpitudinique fore anteponendam et nullum fugiendum, quod revera ita puto contigisse, idcirco dico credens firmiter quod opus militis nostri erat opus magnanimitatis, ex cuius habitu repente elegit opus summe arduum, honeste scilicet mori pro fide et civitate, quam fugiendo inhoneste vivere et forte fuga incerta non subveniente iugum servitutis Sarracenorum subire."

¹⁹ See R. COX, *John Wyclif*.

Henry considers the cause of defending the Christian faith as obviously just and therefore giving moral justification for the use of violence. He cites 1 John 3:16, for example, to the effect that men must be willing to sacrifice their lives for their loved ones, an idea that had already appeared in the initial arguments with reference to the Song of Songs.²⁰ Christ's words concerning non-violence and turning the other cheek have no role in Henry's discussion. Somewhat strikingly, this is quite a common feature of medieval discussions regarding just war.²¹ Furthermore, Henry writes, since war is sometimes necessary to safeguard justice, a republic has the moral duty to maintain an army that may defend the life, republic, freedom, and laws of the people. Henry's remarks concerning the need for a well-trained army are drawn from the *De re militari* of Vegetius.

To determine whether the action of the soldier qualifies as a magnanimous act or should rather be characterized as foolhardiness, Henry first provides an argument *pro* and an argument *contra* in line with standard scholastic practice. Henry's initial argument for the position that the soldier did not commit an act of virtue can be summarized as follows: the soldier would have committed a good work had he saved his own life by escaping. Instead, he chose to attack the enemy and lost his life, which amounts to acting badly. This is proven through words of Augustine "we cannot apply a virtue to a bad use, nor to execute a bad work". In other words, the argument is that action that led to the loss of life of the soldier must have been bad and therefore could not have been an act of virtue.²² The brief counterargument that Henry offers claims that the soldier's action was indeed magnanimous since the soldier attacked the enemy and sacrificed his own life to protect his companions. This was a work of highest charity and in turn of the highest virtue, namely magnanimity. He quotes the verse

²⁰ Cf. 1 John, 3:16: "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

²¹ It should be noted that the Gospels also quoted Christ speaking of war and peace in a very different manner, see, e.g., Matthew, 10:34-37 and Luke, 12:49-53. Thomas Aquinas did not interpret Christ's calls to non-violence in a pacifist manner either. For example, in reply to a counter-argument based on Matthew, 26:52: "All that take up the sword shall perish by the sword" he explains, following Augustine, that taking up the sword refers to arming oneself without having received authority for this from a prince or a judge. This is sinful according to Aquinas, whereas arming oneself by the authority of God, an earthly superior or a judge is completely licit. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 40 a. 1, ad. 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, sicut Augustinus dicit, in II Lib. contra Manich., ille accipit gladium qui, nulla superiori aut legitima potestate aut iubente vel concedente, in sanguinem alicuius armatur. Qui vero ex auctoritate principis vel iudicis, si sit persona privata; vel ex zelo iustitiae, quasi ex auctoritate Dei, si sit persona publica, gladio utitur, non ipse accipit gladium, sed ab alio sibi commisso utitur. Unde ei poena non debetur. Nec tamen illi etiam qui cum peccato gladio utuntur semper gladio occiduntur. Sed ipso suo gladio semper pereunt, quia pro peccato gladii aeternaliter puniuntur, nisi poeniteant."

²² HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, pp. 154-155: "[...] arguitur quod miles praevolans in exercitum hostium non facit opus magnanimitatis, sic. Ubi fugiens bene facit vitam suam salvans, male facit in hostes ruens ut occidatur; sed nuper Sarracenis hostibus Christianorum devastantibus civitatem Acconensem, bene fecerunt qui fugerunt vitam suam salvantes; ergo miles ille, qui aliis fugientibus in exercitum Sarracenorum irruit praevolans et occisus est, male fecit. Sed factum malum non est opus magnanimitatis, cum magnanimitas virtus sit, et secundum Augustinum 'virtutibus non contingit male uti', neque ad agendum malum opus. Ergo etc."

“Love is strong as death” found in Song of Songs to show that profound love makes one ready to risk one’s own life for the beloved person.²³

In the course of his treatment, Henry argues that if the Christian soldier, while attacking the Saracen invaders, knew that his comrades would not follow him and nevertheless attacked the enemy, he did not commit a magnanimous and heroic act but rather a foolish one. On the other hand, even assuming that the reports claiming that the soldier attacked alone and exposed himself to deadly danger are trustworthy, one cannot certainly conclude that his action was not magnanimous. Henry writes that he had been told that the Saracens invaded Acre before the dawn when most of the Christians were still sleeping. For this reason, the Christians had little time for tactical deliberation and had to act immediately. Henry refers to the second book of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in which such situations are the ultimate tests of virtue. The soldier had encountered armed Christian guards on his way to the battle and heard the sounds of Saracens pillaging nearby. While attacking the enemy soldiers, he may have assumed that his companions would join the battle. Instead, he met his death having dashed alone towards the enemies. Henry notes that the soldier was a commander (*dux*) by rank, which allows the reader to infer it was his duty to provide a virtuous example to others.²⁴ Henry does not mention the fate of the soldier’s companions, but knowing the end result of the siege, it is likely that they were killed shortly afterwards.

The position that Henry ultimately takes is that the soldier did commit an act of magnanimity. After having established the historical facts, he writes that the soldier must have realized that he had to fight to avoid the shame of surrendering to the Saracen troops that would have probably led to his enslavement. If he believed that flight was impossible, his act was certainly courageous. Not all courageous acts may be considered magnanimous, however, for, in addition to being courageous, a magnanimous act must be done from a noble and virtuous motive. A brave act done out of greed, for example, would not count as a virtuous or magnanimous act, but since dying for one’s faith and *patria*

²³ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, p. 155: “Contra est quod scribitur Canticorum ultimo: *Fortis est ut mors dilectio*, et hoc ideo quia zelanter diligens pro dilecto in necessitatis articulo mortem contemnit et illi se exponit, quod est opus magnanimitatis. Taliter est ille miles operatus praevolans, ponendo animam suam pro amicis suis in fide et caritate, quod est opus maximae caritatis et ita maximae virtutis in agibilibus, quae consistit in magnanimitate. Ergo etc.”

²⁴ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, pp. 160-161: “Si igitur miles noster non confidens de commilitonum adiutorio, nec putans eos paratos ut simul ad bellum procederent, sed solus in hostes praevolando insiluit, ipse absque omni rationabili causa morti se obtulit, debens scire quod nihil per se solum proficere potuit; et sic opus non magnanimitatis sed stulti egit. Sed nec ex hoc quod iste praevolans solus in hostes irruit et periculo mortis se exposuit, iudicari potest certitudinaliter quod opus magnanimi non egit, quia, ut dicitur, Sarraceni ante auroram subito civitatem Acconensem intraverunt, nec fuit tunc Christicolis in illa contentis tempus deliberationis maioris, sed solummodo statim exercendae virtutis, quae secundum Philosophum II Ethicorum maxime ‘in repentinis’ probatur. Miles igitur noster, qui, ut audivi dici, dux aliorum in bello esse debuit, quam citius occurrisset, forte iacens in excubiis armatus cum aliis et paratus ad bellum, statim audito tumultu et discurrentibus Sarracenis per vicus exiliit, et putans commilitiones suos ipsum consecuturos, in hostes solus irrupit.”

is virtuous, the soldier's action was indeed magnanimous. On the other hand, shamefully fleeing might not even have ultimately helped the soldier in avoiding slavery under the Saracens.²⁵

Henry ends his question with a characteristically detailed exposition of when Christians are allowed to flee in a war. This is done in response to the initial argument that claimed the soldier would have done better had he fled from the battlefield and hence saved his life. The historical case of the siege of Acre and the actions of the Christian knight are at this point moved aside and the focus is turned to the general conditions of fleeing under war. Henry stresses that both spiritual and temporal rulers have the duty to remain defending their faith and homeland instead of fleeing from the enemy. Yet it would be an even greater sin for the spiritual rulers to abandon their faithful. This is because it is their highest duty to keep the Christian faith alive among the common folk. Large parts of his treatment are based on direct quotations of Augustine's *De utilitate credendi ad Honoratum*. The bottom line of Henry's analysis is that whenever there is the slightest chance of resisting the enemy, all Christians, including women, ought to take part in the fight. Since there is relatively little that is particularly original in this account, I will not discuss the numerous distinctions and subdistinctions Henry draws.²⁶

Regarding the Siege of Acre and the defense of Christian territory, Henry's main conclusion, that all Christians should have joined forces in fighting infidel invaders with a self-sacrificing attitude, is a combination of two historical traditions: first, the biblical faith in the possibility of God's miraculous interventions in the wars waged by his people and, second, Roman patriotism, mainly drawn from Cicero, according to which death for one's *patria* was seen as a great honor. Henry's use of the concept of dying for the fatherland (*pro patria mori*) is noteworthy. In a study of the history of the concept, Kantorowicz explains how the term lost and regained its religious connotations over the course of the Middle Ages. Kantorowicz considers Henry's use of the concept and especially his comparison between Christ's sacrifice of his own life for humanity and a soldier's sacrifice for his comrades as "a final blessing to death *pro patria*."²⁷ I will end this article with a look into Henry's

²⁵ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet* XV, q. 16, p. 159: "Quamquam ergo factum militis nostri arduum fuit et magnum, quia circa mortis periculum atque terribile, circa quod maxime consistit fortitudo, dicente Philosopho in IV Ethicorum: 'Circa qualia igitur terribilia fortis? Vel circa maxima; terribilissimum autem mors; terminus enim', non tamen ex hoc sequitur quod fuit opus fortitudinis seu magnanimitatis aut alicuius virtutis, si forte illud aggressus est ex praesumptione aut ambitione gloriae aut cupiditate alia aut forte temere et inconsulte, quod videtur innuere ipsa quaestio in eo quod dicit militem praevolasse. Si enim ita fuit nec opus virtutis et ita nec fortitudinis nec magnanimitatis fuit." On medieval views concerning dying for one's fatherland, see E. H. KANTOROWICZ "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought," in: *The American Historical Review* 56/3 (1951), pp. 472-492, especially pp. 489-490 for a brief discussion of Henry of Ghent.

²⁶ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet* XV, q. 16, pp. 170-171: "Unde si sic mutuo sese iuvassent Acconenses, non solum viri, sed etiam mulieres viros, qualiter iuverunt matronae Romanae in obsidione civitatis quae per auxilium earum liberata est, puto, ut praedixi, quod victoriam obtinuissent." Macken goes through some of Henry's distinctions in R. MACKEN "Human Heroism," pp. 36-43.

²⁷ To briefly summarize Kantorowicz's ideas: following Augustine, early-medieval authors held that dying for one's country was less valuable, since the heavenly city was regarded as the common *patria* of all Christians. Later on, when

ideas regarding divine intervention in human affairs. First, however, I will look at Henry's discussion of magnanimity and suicide.

4. *Henry on magnanimity*

The concept of magnanimity is crucial for Henry's question. Thirteenth-century theories of magnanimity, most notably the theory of Thomas Aquinas, were based on Aristotle's treatment of magnanimity, which he discussed at length in *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 3 and *Eudemian Ethics*, III, 5.²⁸ The virtue of magnanimity, as the Latin and Greek terms (μεγαλοψυχία, *magnanimitas*) imply, is concerned with great things. Aristotle states that a magnanimous man is someone who rightly knows he is worthy of great things. In Aristotle's discussion, the great things mainly refer to honors.²⁹ The contrary vice of magnanimity is named pusillanimity. Pusillanimous persons think too little of their own worth and capabilities. For Aristotle, being pusillanimous is even worse than being unworthy and incapable, because pusillanimity implies an intellectual error. Pusillanimous people are mistaken in their self-appraisal. On the other hand, someone who presumes himself to be worthy when this is not actually the case is not magnanimous, but foolishly mistaken. A truly magnanimous person, Aristotle writes, does not seek glory and honors as such but is rather driven by a sense of

the concept of *corpus mysticum*, originally denoting the Eucharistic bread, came to refer to political communities in addition to the Church, the fatherland and death for its own sake acquired exalted religious meanings it had not had in the earlier centuries. See E. H. KANTOROWICZ "Pro Patria Mori", p. 484-488. In 1286, Henry had written another quodlibetal question on whether someone who did not believe in life after death should choose to die for the commonwealth (see HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XII*, q. 13, ed. J. DECORTE, Leuven 1987, pp. 67-79). In brief, Henry's position is that if the nonbeliever is a part of the community concerned, he should still be willing to die for the sake of virtue and the common good even if he does not hope for life after death. Henry considers the case of a contemplative man detached from society, but ultimately thinks the contemplative man should also be ready to die for the commonwealth. See HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XII*, q. 13, p. 78: "Unde, etsi non sit pars eius quoad exercitium multorum actuum qui pertinent ad vitam politicam circa regimen domus et familiae et circa amicos et huiusmodi, est tamen semper manens pars eius quoad exercitium actus necessarii ad salutem rei publicae conservandae. Unde si res publica indigeret quod vir eremita philosophicus speculativus et subtractus a communi vita esset rector regni provinciae aut civitatis, ipse dimissa sua speculatione deberet descendere ad actionem et fieri rector civitatis et rei publicae." For an analysis of this question, see G. FIORAVANTI, "Pro patria mori: un conflitto di modelli etici nel pensiero medievale," in: M. BARBANTI-G. R. GIARDINA-P. MANGANARO (eds.), *ΕΝΩΣΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΙΑ. Unione e amicizia. Omaggio a Francesco Romano*, Catania 2002, pp. 643-651.

²⁸ Aristotle's doctrine has been subject to long-lasting scholarly debate. Several commentators have found Aristotle's image of the magnanimous man as self-absorbed and even repulsive. See W. F. R. HARDIE, "'Magnanimity' in Aristotle's Ethics," in: *Phronesis* 23 (1978), pp. 63-79, esp. 66; for a more recent interpretation, see D. C. RUSSELL, "Aristotle's Virtues of Greatness," in: R. KAMTEKAR (ed.), *Virtue and Happiness: Essays in Honour of Julia Annas* (= OSAP, Suppl. Vol. 2012), Oxford 2012, pp. 115-147.

²⁹ ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV c. 3, 1124b3 and 1123b18; see D. A. HORNER, "What It Takes to Be Great: Aristotle and Aquinas on Magnanimity," in: *Faith and Philosophy. Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 15/4, (1998), pp. 415-444, esp. 417, and J. A. HERDT, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices*, Chicago 2008, pp. 38-43.

duty. Furthermore, he does not seek risks for the sake of the excitement one gets in a dangerous situation but does not avoid danger either while attempting to achieve things of great worth.³⁰

There are some striking features in Aristotle's description of magnanimity. First, while the magnanimous person is chiefly concerned with honor, paradoxically Aristotle also argues that he puts little value on honor and other goods of fortune. Knowing that his extraordinary virtue is worthy of great honors, he rightly accepts the honors given by others but at the same time despises them.³¹ Secondly, the basic scheme in Aristotle's virtue ethics is that a virtue is a mean between two extremes. This also applies to magnanimity. The two extremes to be avoided are vanity and pusillanimity. Nevertheless, at the same time, Aristotle considers magnanimity as a kind of a crown of other virtues. Rather than being an independent virtue, magnanimity is a mode of having the rest of the virtues in a great way.³²

As earlier commentators have pointed out, Aristotle's understanding of magnanimity seems at first sight quite incompatible with Christian theology.³³ According to Aristotle, a magnanimous person thinks of himself as worthy of the greatest honors. Therefore, magnanimity seems incompatible with humility, which is a virtue according to Christian theology. Augustine criticized pagan ideas of magnanimity claiming that, similarly to other examples of seemingly virtuous pagan action, Aristotle's magnanimous person only acts for the sake of feeling morally superior. While the external action might be virtuous, the inner motivation is nevertheless corrupted and renders the action sinful.³⁴ However, in practice few medieval Christian authors had problems with the Aristotelian understanding of magnanimity.³⁵ One important reason for this is that the virtue of magnanimity was first assimilated into medieval theology in a Stoic form through Peter Abelard. Stoic understanding of magnanimity was closer to the virtue of bravery and did not contain the more

³⁰ See ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 3, 1123b8-12; 1125a27-35; 1123b5-6 and 1123b7-10.

³¹ Some commentators claim this tension is caused by Aristotle's attempt to combine the Homeric hero with the Socratic hero. While the former is very much concerned with achieving the goods of fortune including honor, the latter is indifferent towards honor and values only virtue itself. Horner thinks this tension can be resolved by distinguishing between the magnanimous person's desire to being honored and being honorable. See D.A. HORNER, "What It Takes to Be Great," pp. 417-420.

³² ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV c. 3 (1124a1-3); see W. F. R. HARDIE, "'Magnanimity,'" p. 63; D. A. HORNER, "What It Takes to Be Great," pp. 418 and 423; N. COOPER, "Aristotle's Crowning Virtue," in: *Apeiron* 22/3 (1989), pp. 191-205.

³³ See, e.g., J. MARENBNON, "Magnanimity, Christian Ethics, and Paganism in the Latin Middle Ages," in: S. VASALOU (ed.), *The Measure of Greatness: Philosophers on Magnanimity*, Oxford 2019, pp. 88-116, esp. 88; D. A. HORNER, "What It Takes to be Great," p. 417; T. HOFFMANN, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Magnanimity," in: I. P. BEJCZY (ed.), *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages. Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200-1500*, Boston 2008, pp. 101-129, esp. 101. The situation is similar with reference to Aristotle's understanding of courage. Given the Christian belief that Christ demonstrates all virtues perfectly, how is his humble death on the cross to be reconciled with a view of courage that is most properly demonstrated by valor and bravery on the battlefield in the face of death? See J. A. HERDT, "Aquinas's Aristotelian Defense of Martyr Courage," in: T. HOFFMANN – J. MÜLLER – M. PERKAMS (eds.), *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 110-128, esp. 114.

³⁴ J. A. HERDT, *Putting on Virtue*, p. 50.

³⁵ J. MARENBNON, "Magnanimity," pp. 88-89.

theologically problematic Aristotelian features.³⁶ The fact that Henry of Ghent discusses the soldier's action with reference to the virtue of magnanimity instead of bravery, for example, may be explained by the fact that magnanimity had received much attention from the thirteenth century, e.g. in the works of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, following the translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Thomas Aquinas had found some aspects of Aristotle's theory of magnanimity disturbing. According to Aristotle, a magnanimous person correctly considers himself as superior to others. This went against Aquinas's understanding of humility. To counter this problem in Aristotle's account, Aquinas stresses that magnanimity is centered on pursuing the common good (*bonum commune*).³⁷ While for Aristotle a magnanimous person was mostly concerned with the excellence of his own virtue, Aquinas stresses that owing to their magnanimity people see themselves as worthy of great things considering the gifts they have received from God. Therefore, the correct attitude towards one's own magnanimity is that of gratitude. For Aquinas, being magnanimous directs the person to use his magnificent virtues to help the community and its good, while acknowledging his indebtedness to God.³⁸ This is a markedly Christian innovation on the theory of magnanimity and Aquinas's strategy for getting rid of the disturbing self-sufficiency of Aristotle's magnanimous person. While Henry does not mention the gratitude that the magnanimous person should have towards God, emphasis on the common good and on the love of one's neighbor found in Aquinas's

³⁶ ID., "Magnanimity," p. 113. For a more thorough study of the ancient discussions of magnanimity and their adaptation in Christian theology, see R.-A. GAUTHIER, *Magnanimité. L'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne*, Paris 1951. Despite its age, Gauthier's study remains important and influential. For a discussion of Peter Abelard's definition of magnanimity and its influence, see ID., *Magnanimité* pp. 257-282. Like most other commentators, Gauthier remains silent concerning Henry of Ghent's views on magnanimity.

³⁷ M. M. KEYS, "Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity," in: *History of Political Thought* 24/1 (2003), pp. 37-65, esp. 42-43.

³⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4: "Dicendum quod in homine invenitur aliquid magnum, quod ex dono Dei possidet, et aliquis defectus, qui competit ei ex infirmitate naturae. Magnanimitas igitur facit quod homo se magnis dignificet secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo, sicut, si habet magnam virtutem animi, magnanimitas facit quod ad perfecta opera virtutis tendat. Et similiter est dicendum de usu cuiuslibet alterius boni, puta scientiae vel exterioris fortunae." Before Aquinas, Albert the Great held a similar view. See T. HOFFMANN, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas," p. 116; J. MARENBOON, "Magnanimity," p. 113; M. M. KEYS, "Aquinas and the Challenge," pp. 53-55; J. A. HERDT, *Putting on Virtue*, pp. 77-80. Gauthier (*Magnanimité* pp. 295-371 and 451-465) discusses Aquinas's views on magnanimity in depth. For Aquinas's views on the closely related virtue of courage, see J. A. HERDT, "Martyr Courage," esp. pp. 118 and 123. Herdt argues that Aquinas reinterpreted the Aristotelian view of courage to accommodate Christian martyrdom and Christ's humility as examples of courage. While Aristotle mainly treated courage as a virtue that could be displayed on the battlefield, for Aquinas courage could and should also be shown in spiritual battles. Aquinas relativizes Aristotle's repeated references to battlefield courage by arguing that courage is readiness to suffer for the sake of good and such readiness is often, but not necessarily, demonstrated in warfare. Müller also notes that Aristotle's description of courage as a virtue primarily demonstrated in civic warfare had limited applicability in medieval Christian usage. Albert the Great held that Christian martyrs demonstrated courage by their readiness to die for a noble cause. Such readiness is a necessary feature of courage, but like Aquinas, Albert held that it could be demonstrated beyond the battlefield too. See J. MÜLLER, "In War and Peace: The Virtue of Courage in the Writings of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas," in: I. P. BEJZY (ed.), *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages. Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200-1500*, Boston 2008, pp. 77-99, esp. 77 and 90-93.

discussion is also apparent in Henry's treatment. Henry stresses time after time the shared goal of Christians to help the Christian city with its people and laws to survive.³⁹

As we have seen, the question Henry seeks to answer in *Quodlibet XV*, question 16, is whether the action of the Christian soldier was motivated by magnanimity or should have fled and tried to save his life instead. If the soldier had no chance of surviving, Henry asks, can we not conclude that his behavior was foolish? As we have seen, this is not the position that Henry takes. On the contrary, he believes the soldier acted in a magnanimous way in risking his life for the sake of his faith, homeland, and friends.⁴⁰ The soldier was not blameworthy because his companions and other inhabitants of Acre did not follow him in his charge against the enemy. Henry's treatment of magnanimity shows similarities but also many marked differences from the approach taken by Thomas Aquinas. It appears that although Henry does not explicitly criticize Aristotle, his picture of magnanimity is not the standard Aristotelian view as mediated by Aquinas and others. On the contrary, Henry avoids the problematic Aristotelian features and treats the virtue of magnanimity as a more general kind of courage. This look into Henry's discussion of the virtue of magnanimity shows that his approach is clearly different from that taken by Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great before him. Albert and Thomas went to great lengths in reinterpreting the Aristotelian concept of magnanimity to even out the features that seemed disturbing from a Christian viewpoint.⁴¹ Although medieval views of magnanimity have been examined by several recent scholars, the unique features of Henry's discussion have been largely ignored in previous scholarship. Nevertheless, Henry's views on magnanimity in *Quodlibet XV*, question 16 fit well into his general philosophical outlook, dominated by the tendency to criticize or bypass those Aristotelian views that conflict with an Augustinian theological outlook. In fact, Henry's take on magnanimity comes close to how Christian authors saw the virtue of magnanimity before the assimilation of Aristotle into the university curricula. As other scholars have shown, the late ancient Christian authors had a Stoic conception of magnanimity, in which the term magnanimity came close in meaning to courage.⁴² Reading Henry's

³⁹ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, p. 162: "Unde Acconenses, ut credo, victoriam obtinuissent, si bellicassent pro posse suo, et confisi Domino dixissent unanimiter, unusquisque eorum ad ceteros illud quod dixit Iudas [...]" (cf. 1 Macc., 3:20-22).

⁴⁰ See the texts quoted in footnotes 18 and 24.

⁴¹ T. HOFFMANN "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas," p. 128.

⁴² J. MARENBOON, "Magnanimity," pp. 88-95. While *Quodlibet XV*, question 16 remains Henry's most extended discussion of the topic, Henry also briefly discussed magnanimity and its relation to humility in *Quodlibet XIII*, question 17, ed. J. DECORTE, Leuven 1985, pp. 237-238. In this slightly earlier work, Henry treats magnanimity in Aristotelian terms, quoting *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV. For Aristotle, courage was connected to both confident attacking and the ability to endure fear. Both Albert and Thomas Aquinas stress the endurance of courageous people. Müller ("In War and Peace," p. 92) argues that this argumentative strategy is motivated by their stress on the endurance of Christian martyrs in their discussion of martyrdom. From this perspective too, Henry could have well built his discussion of the value of the actions of the soldier of Acre around the concept of courage. After all, much of Henry's ethical discussion is centred

discussion regarding the Siege of Acre shows that Henry thinks of magnanimity in terms of courage on the battlefield. Meanwhile, he does not even mention the concepts of honors (*honores*) nor the correct self-appraisal of the magnanimous person that had been so central to Aristotle's discussion of magnanimity. Unlike Albert and Aquinas, Henry does not attribute the worth that magnanimous persons observe in their soul to God either. Henry thus takes the Aristotelian term *magnanimitas*, but uses it in a quite different sense from his Christian predecessors as well as from Aristotle.

5. *Self-preservation and suicide*

Although Henry does not make explicit mention of suicide in the initial arguments, one of his main concerns is whether the soldier caused his own death either intentionally or by carelessness and foolhardy action and failed to protect his own life. Both medieval Christianity as well as Islam and Judaism agreed that suicide was a sin against God. Broadly speaking, medieval Christian authors followed Augustine, who had condemned suicide categorically. Augustine's views on suicide were multifaceted, but he did state on occasion that suicide merited eternal punishment in hell.⁴³ Interestingly, in the *City of God* Augustine had explicitly denied that committing suicide could be magnanimous. Augustine considered the fact that neither patriarchs, prophets, apostles nor Christ himself ever committed or recommended suicide as sufficient evidence that although there were numerous examples of sometimes exalted suicides known from pagan writings, suicide was not to be imitated by Christians.⁴⁴ Augustine's view was that the fifth commandment "Do not kill" amounts to a prohibition of suicide, but does not prohibit killing in warfare, provided that the war under consideration could be considered just and righteous.

The topic of suicide was not crucial to earlier scholastic thinking. While Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and Alexander of Hales's commentary on Lombard's text, for example, make no mention of suicide, William of Auxerre has a few scattered remarks concerning it. Alexander Murray explains that the topic was generally avoided until the birth of the encyclopedic theological *summas*, which required the theologians to take the topic of suicide into account as a moral philosophical subject. The *Summa Halensis* is the first scholastic work to include a major treatment of the topic of suicide.

on the question of whether the action of the soldier of Acre would have been more virtuous had he waited instead of rushing to the battle alone.

⁴³ See V. MÄKINEN, "Moral Philosophical Arguments against Suicide in the Middle Ages," in: M. HONKSAALO – M. TUOMINEN (eds.), *Culture, Suicide, and the Human Condition*, New York 2014, pp. **-**, esp. 130; see also A. MURRAY, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 2: *The Curse on Self-Murder*, Oxford 2000, pp. 113-121.

⁴⁴ See J. MARENBOON, "Magnanimity," pp. 90-91. Cf. AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, I, 22, ed. B. DOMBART – A. KALB, Turnhout 1955, pp. 36-37.

Its authors present mostly arguments borrowed from Neoplatonic sources against suicide. One of these arguments, going back to Porphyry, starts with the premise that the task of human beings on earth is to grow towards perfection. Since taking one's own life reduces the chances of achieving that perfection, suicide ought to be forbidden.⁴⁵

The translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* had profound consequences for the scholastic discussion of suicide, as can be seen in Aquinas's treatment of suicide in *Summa theologiae* where Aristotle is referred to more often than either Augustine or Biblical texts. Aquinas adopts the Aristotelian priority of the common good, arguing that harming a part of the whole harms the whole in that measure. Therefore, hurting one human being will equally hurt the community he is part of.⁴⁶ Without mentioning Aquinas, Henry too is concerned with the common good in his analysis of the soldier's actions. If the soldier was killed in vain because of his own recklessness, his death contributed little to the common good of the Christians living in Acre. Had he been able to act as an example to his fellow Christians, however, his courage could have helped to save the entire community.

Suicide presented an important ethical problem to medieval philosophers. In *Quodlibet I*, question 20, Henry asked whether actively choosing non-being could sometimes be preferable to choosing to live in sin. In this question, Henry observed that judging from Augustinian insights, non-being had no real existence and could not be the object of the will as such. One could, however, wish for the end of a certain kind of being as the Apostle Paul had hoped for the end of earthly life to live in Christ. The picture looks different from the perspective of Aristotelian philosophy, which does not admit of salvation and life after death. For Aristotle, a virtuous person must prefer death that results from virtuous action to a vicious life. If great virtue requires the death of the agent, then death is seen as an option preferable to a life of lesser virtue. This does not mean, however, that in Aristotelian philosophy death should be chosen over life. Rather, greater virtue should be preferred to lesser virtue. Porro notes that Henry's conclusion contains elements of both Augustinian and Aristotelian philosophy. For him, dying for the sake of virtue may be virtuous given that the evil avoided by death is greater than the evil represented by non-being.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See A. MURRAY, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 2: *The Curse on Self-Murder*, pp. 220-223.

⁴⁶ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 64, a. 5, resp.: "Respondeo dicendum quod seipsum occidere est omnino illicitum triplici ratione. [...] Secundo, quia quaelibet pars id quod est, est totius. Quilibet autem homo est pars communitatis, et ita id quod est, est communitatis. Unde in hoc quod seipsum interficit, iniuriam communitati facit, ut patet per philosophum, in V Ethic." See M. S. KEMPSHALL, *The Common Good in Late Medieval Political Thought*, Oxford 1999, pp. 157-203 on Henry's ideas regarding the common good. Kempshall does not discuss Henry's ideas on war. While it is unlikely that Aquinas would have directly read Abelard, Abelard had already stressed that rightly understood, magnanimous action has to advance the common good (cf. J. MARENBOON, "Magnanimity," p. 93).

⁴⁷ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet I*, q. 20, ed. R. MACKEN, Leuven 1979, pp. 157-170. My discussion of this question is based on an illuminating article by Pasquale Porro: see P. PORRO, "Essere o non essere? Dubbi amletici tra le questioni

Henry also treated the topic of suicide in relation to an individual's right to life in *Quodlibet IX*, question 26.⁴⁸ Here the question is whether someone condemned to death by a judge can flee licitly, given that he has the chance. This question was probably written in 1289, that is, only a couple of years before the events of Acre. Henry could have thus assumed that his audience was broadly familiar with his earlier ideas on the topic, whilst discussing the case of the soldier of Acre. Henry's conclusion is that failing to attempt to escape in such circumstances would practically amount to suicide, given that the individual has a duty to preserve her own life. The medieval theologians saw the duty of self-preservation as a part of natural law decreed by God to govern each and every person. Several medieval authors treated the body of a human being as ultimately owned by God. People had divine permission to use their bodies, but in the final analysis their ownership and dominion remained with God. For this reason, suicide was considered a sin against God. Killing oneself amounted to harming and destroying God's property. Henry argued that while the body of the prisoner belonged to the judge, who in turn had the right to condemn the prisoner to death, the prisoner also had a property right (*proprietas*) over her body as well as a right to preserve her life. Therefore, she had the right to save her life, if it proved possible, without injuring the rights of the judge or anyone else. On these grounds, Henry considered it licit for someone condemned to death to flee if they had the chance.⁴⁹

Henry's strong emphasis on the duty and the right to preserve one's life relates to the soldier of Acre as well. In his discussion of whether the soldier committed a magnanimous act or a mortal sin, Henry has to consider whether he did what he needed to do in order to preserve his life. We now see that *Quodlibet IX*, question 26 is in close connection with *Quodlibet XV*, question 16. In both, Henry is concerned with the permissibility of fleeing and preserving oneself under extreme conditions. In

scolastiche," in: S. PERFETTI (ed.), *Scientia, fides, theologia. Studi di filosofia medievale in onore di Gianfranco Fioravanti*, Pisa 2011, pp. 333-356, esp. 342-352.

⁴⁸ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet IX*, q. 26, ed. R. MACKEN, Leuven 1983, pp. 307-310.

⁴⁹ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet IX*, q. 26, p. 308-309: "Sic dico in proposito quod iudex non tantum iuris habet super corpus damnati, quin et ipsemet damnatus similiter secundum animam habet. Quantum enim habet ille iuris in detinendo et occidendo, tantumdem et plus habet iste in abeundo cum poterit, et vitam custodiendo, et etiam plus iuris habet, quia iudex non tanta necessitate compellitur eum detinere aut occidere, quanta necessitate propter iustum metum mortis compellitur damnatus quod sibi provideat, ne vitam et perfectionem suam in corpore amittat, quia, si in hoc non provideret si posset invenire locum et tempus, ut si forte esset sine vinculis et ostia essent aperta, nec adesset impedimentum abeundi et per hoc vitam salvandi, sui ipsius homicida esset, non providendo sibi sicut deberet." This question has been treated in a number of previous studies and considered a milestone in the discussion on natural rights. See B. TIERNEY, "Natural Rights in the Thirteenth Century: A Quaestio of Henry of Ghent," in: *Speculum* 67/1 (1992), pp. **-**, esp. 62-68; ID., *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law and Church Law, 1150-1625*, Atlanta (Georgia) 1997, pp. 78-89; R. COX, *John Wyclif*, pp. 48-49; V. MÄKINEN, "Moral Philosophical Arguments," p. 134; P. PORRO, "Individual Rights and Common Good: Henry of Ghent and the Scholastic Origins of Human Rights," in: H.-C. GÜNTHER – A. A. ROBIGLIO (eds.), *The European Image of God and Man. A Contribution to the Debate on Human Rights*, Leiden / Boston 2010, pp. 245-258. Porro argues that in the end Henry's conclusions are not so different from Aquinas, but the way he reaches them is.

the former question, human law requires the prisoner to face death, in the latter question the duty of protecting one's *patria* is in conflict with the duty of protecting one's own life.

The topic of suicide in war had been a subject of heated discussion on the other side too. Suicide was strictly forbidden in Islam as a sin against God, just as it was in Christianity. In medieval Islamic legal literature, the question of whether an attack on an invincible opponent amounts to suicide had been much discussed, in close parallel with Henry's question. This question was especially germane in discussions concerning the definition of a martyr. If a warrior actively sought and attained his own death in a hopeless battle, should he be considered a martyr or guilty of suicide? Although I do not claim that Henry would have been aware of the Islamic legal literature, the parallel is nevertheless interesting. While Henry does not set the question in the religious terms of martyrdom, in practice he considers the same question from the viewpoint of virtue ethics. Questions having to do with distinguishing between active seekers of martyrdom and those committing suicide remained critical in Islamic *jihad* literature. Most Muslim exegetes agreed that courageously engaging in a practically hopeless fight on the battlefield did not amount to suicide.⁵⁰ In this regard, Henry thus essentially agreed with the Muslims.

6. *The active role of God in warfare*

In his discussion of the Siege of Acre, Henry quotes 1 Maccabees 3:18-19 to the effect that military victories and defeats are not dependent on the actual size of the army, but rather strength provided by God.⁵¹ This allows him to argue that had the soldier's fellow citizens and warriors followed him in attacking the enemy instead of fleeing, they might, with the help of God, have achieved victory and saved the Christian city from the infidels.⁵²

The idea of God ultimately being in control of military victories and defeats was of course traditional in the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is clear, however, that Henry stressed God's active intervention in warfare much more than his contemporaries. God's active causation and the providential governance of God assume a prominent role in Henry's views on war, which can be

⁵⁰ D. COOK, *Martyrdom in Islam*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 40-41. The problem remains acute in contemporary radical Islam (see *o.c.*, pp. 141-142 & 148-153).

⁵¹ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, p. 162: "Ut enim dicitur I Maccabaeorum 3: *Facile est concludi multos in manu paucorum, et non est differentia in conspectu Dei caeli liberare in multis, et in paucis, quoniam non est ex multitudine exercitus victoria belli, sed de caelo fortitudo est.*"

⁵² Ludolph of Sudheim writes in a similar way: "Yet, even against all this host, they would not have lost the city had they but helped one another faithfully; but when they were fighting without the city, one party would run away and leave the other to be slain." See LUDOLPH OF SUCHEM, *Description of the Holy Land and of the Way Thither*, trans. A. STEWART, London 1895, XII, 54-61, reprinted in J. BRUNDAGE, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, Milwaukee 1962, pp. 268-272.

traced to Augustine's influence. In his *De civitate Dei* Augustine had argued that the fates of earthly empires are actively directed by divine providence.⁵³ Yet when it comes to the stress Henry puts on active divine intervention, I argue, he goes much further than most of his contemporaries. Thomas Aquinas, for example, made no mention of direct divine interventions in his *quaestio de bello*, (*Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 40 a. 1). Several thirteenth-century canon lawyers had stressed God's role in authorizing just wars. Hostiensis, for example, distinguished between seven types of war. The first of these, the Roman war, was waged by Christians against infidels with the approval of Rome and God.⁵⁴ The aspect that makes Henry stand out from the canon lawyers such as Hostiensis is that they did not emphasize God's active role on the actual battlefield. Henry here follows a strand in Augustine's thought that had fallen out of the mainstream in thirteenth-century theological and legal thinking.

The views Henry advances in his late *Quodlibet XV* are already present in an earlier *Quodlibet*. In *Quodlibet V*, questions 31–33, Henry examines three questions concerning acts of sin. The second of these is particularly relevant for my topic. Henry asks whether it is permissible to fight in duels, answering the question in the affirmative. For him, a duel reveals God's preference for one of the fighters. The fighter having trust and faith in God (*fiducia pietatis*) will emerge as winner. Henry uses the Biblical example of David and Goliath in his discussion of duels to prove his point. David was the definite underdog in the battle but was able to slay Goliath because of his faith in God's help.⁵⁵ Analogously, in the question concerning the siege of Acre, Henry stresses that God ultimately decides the outcome of battles. This is what allows him to argue that the soldier did well in attacking an enemy that seemed and in practice turned out to be invincible. Henry writes that had all the inhabitants of Acre followed the example provided by the soldier and placed their faith in God, it would indeed have been possible to counter the Saracen attack.⁵⁶

⁵³ AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, V, 11, p. 211 “[...] nullo modo est credendus regna hominum eorumque dominationes et servitutes a suae providentiae legibus alienas esse voluisse.” Whetham (*Just Wars*, p. 40) notes that medieval authors, influenced by Augustine, held that God helped those with a just cause to military victories. Because of this, various acts of warfare “were seen as attempts to realise an ideal of justice and righteousness.”

⁵⁴ F. H. RUSSELL, *The Just War*, p. 129.

⁵⁵ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet V*, q. 32, in: *Quodlibeta Magistri Henrici Goethals a Gandauo*, Parisiis, Vaenundantur ab Iodoco Badio Ascensio, 1518, repr. Louvain 1961, fol. 210vN: “Et hoc modo licitum est duellum, quale commisit Daud cum Golia. Etenim ipsi Daud inspiratum erat diuinitus vt tale bellum iniret: et quod iudicium voluntatis sue per illud aperiret. Ipsi etiam Saul inspiratum fuit quod ad tale bellum cum Golia Daud admitteret, secundum quod Augustinus in sermo quodam de pugna Daud et Golie dicit: Ausus est iste puer Daud non presumens de viribus suis, sed in nomine dei sui procedere aduersus eum, nunciata est regi non audacia pueritiae, sed fiducia pietatis, nec rex abnuuit, nec recusauit. Intellexit cum videret audentem puerum aliquid diuinitatis in eo esse nec illam teneram aetatem sine diuino instictu talia posse persumere. Vnde quia duellum sic committere diuina dispensatione licuit, in hoc etiam naturam duelli secundum quod communiter de duello loquimur, amisit. Sed sic pugnans ab auctore legis quasi minister instituitur.”

⁵⁶ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet XV*, q. 16, p. 162: “Quod si ceteri concives et commilitones sic fecissent et tales fuissent ut ille, credo quod proculdubio in adiutorio Dei victoriam obtinuissent et civitas staret. Ut enim dicitur I Maccabeorum 3: Facile est concludi multos in manu paucorum, et non est differentia in conspectu Dei caeli liberare in multis, et in paucis, quoniam non est ex multitudine exercitus victoria belli, sed de caelo fortitudo est.”

By way of conclusion, I will draw attention to an interesting parallel in Henry's thought. As we have seen, Henry argues that had the citizens of Acre fought the invaders with all the means to hand, God could have assisted and co-operated with them and provided a more favourable outcome for the Christian people. Had this happened, the Christians could have considered this a fortuitous outcome, while in the final analysis the end result would have been both foreknown and causally preordained by God. Without mentioning the matter in this context, Henry had explained the relationship between good fortune and divine providence in great detail elsewhere in his quodlibetal questions.⁵⁷

Henry opposed the naturalistic theory of good fortune advanced by Giles of Rome, arguing that the phenomenon of continuous good fortune of some people was neither possible nor intelligible without reference to God. In Henry's theory, God has a general and a special providence for the created world. By his general providence, God provides the general conditions in which the species and the natural world can sustain themselves. By his special providence, on the other hand, God controls the unique conditions of individual beings including their fortunes and salvation. Henry stressed that God has particular concern for all human beings and the good fortune of some cannot be explained without reference to God's active role. However, for Henry and his contemporaries, God's action does not nullify human responsibility. It is easy to see the close parallel to the ideas in Henry's discussion of the siege of Acre. For Henry, God had decisive control over the outcomes of battles in the past and present.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the people of Acre retained the freedom and responsibility to act in accordance with God's will and defend their city. While the protagonist of the question acted magnanimously and did everything in his power, the failure of the general Christian population to defend Acre with all means available was for Henry the cause of the destruction of the city.

This parallel clearly shows that Henry did not develop his ideas regarding the need for divine collaboration in waging a war *ad hoc* for this very question at a late part of his life. On the contrary, he had presented a complete theory of the role of divine assistance in human success some ten years before in *Quodlibet VI*. Henry had emphasized the need for divine intervention far more than his contemporaries in his theory of good fortune. This very same emphasis on God's active causal role also gives his discussion on the ethics of war a sense that, despite its traditional Augustinian beginnings, remains unique and original in the context of thirteenth-century academic theology.

⁵⁷ HENRY OF GHENT, *Quodlibet VI*, q. 10, ed. G. WILSON, Leuven 1987, pp. 87-127. For Henry's theory of divine providence and good fortune, see M. POSTI, *Medieval Theories of Divine Providence*, Leiden 2020, pp. 220-234; V. CORDONIER, "Une lecture critique de la théologie d'Aristote: le *Quodlibet VI*, 10 d'Henri de Gand comme réponse à Gilles de Rome," in: V. CORDONIER – T. SUAREZ-NANI, *L'aristotélisme exposé. Aspects du débat philosophique entre Henri de Gand et Gilles de Rome*, Fribourg 2014, pp. 83-180; G. WILSON "Henry of Ghent on Fatalism and Naturalism," in: P. D'HOINE – G. VAN RIEL (eds.), *Fate, Providence and Moral Responsibility in Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Thought*, Leuven 2014, pp. 591-603.

⁵⁸ See the text quoted in footnote 56.