

Studiositas and Curiositas.
Virtues and Vices in Contemporary Academic Research

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Virtudes y vicios en la investigación académica contemporánea

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to analyze the relationship between virtue and knowledge, delving into the virtue of *studiositas* and the vice of *curiositas* in the *Summa Theologiae*, in order to highlight its relevance in academic research. First, the *studiositas* will be defined. Secondly, the same will be done with the vice of *curiositas*, separating it into its different forms. Thirdly, it will be shown why *curiositas* is present in contemporary academic research through the description of five very common pathologies. Finally, some reasons will be given to place *studiositas* as a remedy for these pathologies.

Keywords: Academic research, curiositas, studiositas, vice, virtue.

Resumen

El objetivo principal de este artículo es analizar la relación entre virtud y conocimiento, profundizando en la virtud de la *studiositas* y el vicio de la *curiositas* en la *Summa Theologiae*, resaltando su actualidad en la investigación académica. Primero, se definirá la *studiositas*. En la segunda parte, se hará lo mismo con el vicio de la *curiositas*, desglosando sus distintas formas. En tercer lugar, se demostrará por qué la *curiositas* está presente en la investigación académica contemporánea mediante la descripción de cinco patologías muy comunes. Por último, se ofrecerán razones para situar a la *studiositas* como remedio de estas patologías.

Palabras clave: Curiositas, investigación académica, studiositas, vicio, virtud.

Introduction

Human openness to the world takes place through knowledge and love. With them, the human being can know and love all things, but that human capacity is simultaneously limited by the personal conditions of space and time. He lives in a certain place, under certain conditions and for a few years. Living life, therefore, implies considering what life deserves to be lived. The response of each person depends on innumerable factors and on a worldview that includes, in a very special way, concepts and experiences about God, man and the world.

Today's man lives in a deeply self-satisfied world. Around so many scarcities, violence, contradictions and emptiness, this is more than paradoxical and even schizophrenic, to a certain extent. The origin of this self-satisfaction is an epistemological attitude, typical of bourgeois sensibility that, as Pieper (1987) suggested, finds everything self-evident, understandable by itself. The university environment is not outside this pathology of reason, which refuses, on principle, to transcend what is empirical, to unveil the essence of things and to give credibility to the normative dimension of practical knowledge (Warne, 2018).

In universities there is usually a permanent tension between two ways of understanding and projecting an institution which, in fact, has an eight-century legacy in the West. On the one hand, there is the tendency to conceive of the university as an institution devoted to the commercialization of a product (professional and postgraduate degrees, patents, research) destined to be consumed by a broad public (students, families, businessmen and the productive sector). At the same time, and particularly from the humanities and social sciences, which have not been impressed by behaviorist revolutions or by the positivist spirit that promised a dialogue between peers with the natural sciences, there is also a tendency in universities to

try to build academic life, above all, an environment of honest reflection, sincere dialogue and the courageous search for truth. From this perspective, it is promoted the enthusiastic belief that, even if something is not profitable, it should have a place there (publications, scholarships, research stays, projects on theoretical and not only applied problems) This means that knowledge perfects the human being, although it does not necessarily do so because it provides a better salary.

In sum, this is about making this institution, first of all, a *Universitas magistrorum et scholarium*: a community of people —professors and students — identified by their common desire to know the truth. Probably every university, to varying extents, faces the dilemma of being an institution whose paradigm was conceived in medieval times, but which must survive in a postmodern world that demands the quantification —and if possible, the dollarization— of all human labor, including knowledge (Buitrago, 2017).

This dilemma permeates university life and, specifically, research activity, and, therefore, it is urgent to face the philosophical, epistemological and anthropological challenge that this represents. This article revolves around two ideas that allow us to return to the nature of university life: the essence of academic life is knowledge and the search for truth. Thus, this search is a deeply personal process, which has effects on the group and social environment.

As the text arises from a concern about the crisis of rationality and, specifically, by the «abandonment of sapiential reason», it also deals with several problems of a practical nature: the relationship between vices and virtues with knowledge, conditioning of emotions and passions in the cognitive process, as well as some hazards of the academic profession. This involves: ideological complacency, personal rivalries, carefully cultivated envy and pettiness, unhealthy competition and other issues that, although common in this field, belie the magnanimity potential of knowledge, and on the contrary, could turn the search of knowing an unattainable goal, and make of knowledge an irrelevant task.

This article does not address such a broad topic. Its objective is, rather, to study the relationship between virtue and knowledge

through an approach to *studiositas* and *curiositas* in the *Summa Theologiae* (from now on quoted as *S. Th.*) of St. Thomas Aquinas, thematized in quaestio 166 and 167 of II-II respectively, trying highlight its relevance in contemporary academic research in dialogue with different authors who have dealt with this and other related topics.

In the first part, the necessary assumptions will be exposed to understand the virtue of *studiositas* in the conception of St. Thomas Aquinas, presenting the anthropological framework that supports it, its definition and its substantial aspects. In the second part, the same will be done with the vice of *curiositas*, breaking down its different forms based on the approaches of the Common Doctor in q. 167 of the *S. Th.* In the third part, it will be based on why the *curiositas* in its different forms is present in contemporary academic research from the description of five very common pathologies with their respective examples, which will allow, in the fourth part, to be explained in how does *studiositas* remedy these pathologies and present the main conclusions of the present investigation.

Studiositas in St. Thomas Aquinas

As a starting point for the consideration of thomistic ideas about the virtue of *studiositas*, his distinction between the inclination towards goods that human beings have in common with animals and the inclination towards goods that are specifically human, or that is, goods conforming to reason, to the spiritual dimension of man. Specifically, it is striking that, among the specifically human inclinations, St. Thomas includes that of know the truth about God.

It might be thought that the correct order according to a typical thomistic methodology would first include the knowledge of human truths, that is, of the truths about man. However, what is deduced from the words of St. Thomas is that the knowledge of the things that serve the subject who knows is common with the rest of the animals even when each one does it in his own way. In the case of man, in a rational, conscious way. In any case, the truths most typical of man begin with the knowledge of his being his creature and, therefore,

with the knowledge of God and of everything that is ordered to God as to his end (Casanova, 2021).

The place of the *studiositas* in the *Summa Theologiae* is the first thing that strikes the eye. Temperance is one of the main or fundamental virtues that Aquinas considers, although in the last place among them. This fundamental virtue has as its most proper object the moderation of the desires for the greatest delights. These are, precisely, those that come from the natural appetites which seek their own survival and that of the species. Therefore, these tendencies are the ones that the human being shares most with irrational animals. Being temperate would mean, then, being more human, moving away from what can animalize the most, from leading to crude behavior (Santin & Oliveira, 2019).

The passions exercise two movements. The first consists of pursuing the sensible and corporeal good. The second, in avoiding sensible and bodily evil. And, it is the first movement that opposes reason in a particular way which is not moderate. And, it opposes reason because, not being moderate, its movement towards sensible and corporeal good is not regulated by reason. In this sense, it is irrational, and therefore unrestrained. That means, it is not under the rule of reason. Thus, it is what temperance seeks as a virtue, to order these passions according to reason.

The *studiositas* does not appear, at first glance, to be of this kind of virtue. The desire of knowing is not one of those mentioned by St. Thomas in the question about temperance in general (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 141). However, what was at issue in that question was its most proper matter. Thus, in the article 2 of the same question, Aquinate points out that the name of temperance admits a double meaning. In the first place, according to its most common meaning, temperance is not a special virtue, but a general one. It indicates, in effect, a certain moderation or tempering imposed by reason on human acts and passionate movements, that is, something common to all moral virtue. However, the notion of temperance is different from that of strength, although both are considered fundamental virtues. Thus, temperance separates man from what attracts him against reason, and strength, on the other hand, encourages him to endure and face

the fight against what leads him to shun the good of reason. But, if temperance is considered par excellence, as what puts a brake on the desire of what attracts man more strongly, then it is a special virtue, which has a special matter, just like strength (Ayala & Rainier, 2022).

Thus, according to its most common meaning, which corresponds to the one that makes it a cardinal virtue, the virtue of temperance has below it, a series of other virtues that moderate human passions. They are secondary virtues, which moderate passionate movements: they are the integral parts of temperance. Furthermore, St. Thomas also distinguishes the potential parts of temperance, among which modesty is included. This is in charge of regulating the less imperative movements of the passions, and, therefore, is easier to moderate.

With this in mind, it is pertinent to remember that, in moral terms, St. Thomas classifies *studiositas* as a secondary virtue and a potential part of temperance included under modesty. Quoting Cicero, St. Thomas states that there are four objects that should be tempered by modesty:

One is the movement of the mind towards some excellence, and this is moderated by «humility». The second is the desire of things pertaining to knowledge, and this is moderated by «studiousness» which is opposed to curiosity. The third regards bodily movements and actions, which require to be done becomingly and honestly, whether we act seriously or in play. The fourth regards outward show, for instance in dress and the like (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 160, a. 2, co.).¹

¹ "Unum est motus animi ad aliquam excellentiam, quem moderatur humilitas. Secundum autem est desiderium eorum quae pertinent ad cognitionem, et in hoc moderatur studiositas, quae opponitur curiositati. Tertium autem, quod pertinet ad corporales motus et actiones, ut scilicet decenter et honeste fiant, tam in his quae serio, quam in his quae ludo aguntur. Quartum autem est quod pertinet ad exteriorem apparatus, puta in vestibus et aliis huiusmodi". Quotations from the *Summa Theologiae* are taken from the Leonine edition, available at Thomas de Aquino, *Opera omnia* (<https://www.corpusthomaticum.org>). The English translation of the quotations is taken from Aquinas, S. Th. *Summa Theologica*. Translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (<http://www.documenta-catholica.eu>).

Properly, St. Thomas addresses the issue of *studiositas* in question 166 of *S. Th.*, II-II. In the first article, dedicated to the question *Whether the proper matter of studiousness is knowledge*,² St. Thomas affirms that the mind is not applied to a thing except by knowing that thing (co.). In all of Aquinas work, the priority of intellectual acts in the dynamics of human action is a constant, as is clear in the answer to the first objection of the aforementioned article: “Hence studiousness, to whatever matter it be applied, has a prior regard for knowledge”.³

If you read carefully, St. Thomas is not distinguishing between good and bad actions as if the ignorance of something could lead to some type of action. Rather, he is affirming that, for there to be a true human action, true human actions, a prior knowledge is a *sine qua non* condition, since the unknown cannot be desired and, therefore, does not move man to any form of action; in other words, it doesn't exist for him. According to Frankfurt (2006), the truth provides a basis and motivation for human curiosity about the facts and their commitment to the importance of research. Man is concerned with accumulating truths because he considers the truth to be important to him. Thus, you act based on the knowledge you have. What is not known does not influence the action in any way.

First, the opening of the human spirit is done through knowledge. The latin word used by St. Thomas is *mens*, mind: “Wherefore the mind's application to knowledge precedes its application to those things to which man is directed by his knowledge. Hence study regards knowledge in the first place” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 166, a. 1, co.).⁴ After knowledge come all the other actions that are possible for the human spirit, which have their origin in cognitive possession and with it begin. With this clarity, it can be understood that St. Thomas defines study as “application of mind to something” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 166, a. 1, co.).⁵ Hence, the study refers mainly to knowledge, but

2 “*Utrum materia studiositatis sit proprie cognitio*”.

3 “*Per prius studiositas cognitionem respicit, cuicumque materiae studium adhibeatur*”.

4 “[...] per prius mens applicatur ad cognitionem, secundario autem applicatur ad ea in quibus homo per cognitionem dirigitur. Et ideo studium per prius respicit cognitionem”.

5 “[...] applicationem mentis ad aliquid”.

secondly, it also refers to “any other things the working of which requires to be directed by knowledge” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 166, a. 1, co.).⁶ It is necessary to note that St. Thomas emphasizes the knowledge necessary to do well, thereby implying that, properly speaking, what interests him is practical truth. However, it should not be forgotten that the guide to practical truth is theoretical or speculative truth and, together with this, the circumstances of the action.

According to St. Thomas, knowledge of the end and of what leads man to that end is an inexcusable requirement to possess the highest good, that is, it is necessary to know the truth, live with it and according to it, follow it to the end. It is, possibly, in the platonic dialogues where it is expressed with the greatest clarity that there is no authentic happiness without access to the truth. Unless the truth enters into the composition of ingredients necessary for happiness, nothing can be created or subsisted (Lynch, 2004).

Having reached this point, it is not necessary to insist that man, to carry out his life well, to act well, to be truly human, needs knowledge. The *studiositas*, as understood by St. Thomas, is the moral virtue by means of which the knowledge is obtained that allows man to live a good life. This is better understood when Aquinas sentences that the prudence is the complement of all the moral virtues. Consequently, in so far as the knowledge of prudence pertains to all the virtues, the term *studiositas*, which properly regards knowledge, is applied to all the virtues (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 166, a. 2, ad. 1).

In these words, is synthesized all the meaning that St. Thomas attributes to the moral virtue of the *studiositas*. For there to be moral virtue, it is essential to have reached a knowledge of its subject and of one’s own good in that regard. Moral habits are acquired by repetition of acts; human acts that are directed by the will towards the good marked by reason; human acts that are adapted to concrete reality.

The virtue of *studiositas* looks first towards what it is necessary to know to act well. Not only that which concerns every man for the mere fact of being one, but also everything related to his own situation in the world, in his specific circumstances. Not only

6 “[...] alia ad quae operanda directione cognitionis indigemus”.

knowing what is good, but also knowing how to do good. And this is what studiousness looks to in the second place: to the works that he must perform through the guidance of knowledge. In this sense, St. Thomas points out that the desire to know, from the point of view of knowledge, may have sensuality and greed as its objects, but this knowledge is purely instrumental in the work to be done and therefore lacks what it is essential in virtue: the knowledge of the good to act, the order to the good.

Curiositas in St. Thomas Aquinas

Curiosity as vice is the disorder in the tendency of the appetite for knowledge, which is always present in man, since the desire to know is part of his nature. It is important to distinguish curiosity as care and attention to entities, as a natural tendency to know (from the latin *cure*, care) and curiosity as a vice, which implies the disorder of natural appetite.

The desire to know hidden things shows that we are naturally apt to contemplate. The desire to know in matters of geography, theater, history, ethnography, demonstrates it – and even voyeurism does. The natural desire to know, on which Aristotle was already based, but which he left on a theoretical level, is here brought closer to its daily source. Aristotle also took our taste for travel as a testimony. This desire finally receives its name, which is now classic, curiosity: «Curiosity is a gift of nature in us». Except that the term «curiosity» does not yet mean in Seneca what it means now. Let us guess a very important concept in him, heals, the attention is restless about something, the concern about it (Brague, 2008: 182-183; traduction from the spanish by the authors).

St. Thomas studies the vice of curiosity in question 167 of *S. Th.*, II-II. His argument is developed in two articles. In the first, he wonders if curiosity can deal with intellectual knowledge and, in the second, if sensitive knowledge is the object of curiosity. Apparently,

the vice of curiosity does not fit into intellectual knowledge since knowing in itself is a good thing that helps man to live according to his rational nature and that is what happy life consists of. However, St. Thomas, offering a clarification on studiousness, allows us to understand, at the same time, the object of curiosity. Studiousness is directly, not about knowledge itself, but about the desire and study in the pursuit of knowledge. Now we must judge differently of the knowledge itself of truth, and of the desire and study in the pursuit of the knowledge of truth. For the knowledge of truth, strictly speaking, is good, but it may be evil accidentally, by reason of some result (*S.Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, co.).

Indeed, this distinction is essential in order not to get confused and to clearly recognize what Aquinas is talking about and what he is not talking about. In short, knowledge in itself is always good, “because man’s perfection would seem to consist in his intellect being reduced from potentiality to act, and this is done by the knowledge of truth” (*S.Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, arg. 1).⁷ The truth is the good of the understanding, but something can be good in itself considered and not the means used to achieve it or the ends that led to action. Thus, “the desire or study in pursuing the knowledge of truth may be right or wrong” (*S.Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, co.).⁸

According to St. Thomas, the first reason why the appetite to know can be vicious is that the reason is to be arrogant or to sin better. If the reasons why a person seeks greater knowledge of any reality is to boast in front of others, feel better than them or have more science to do evil, that natural desire to know in man is vitiated in its purpose, since its utility is no longer the good of the people. Secondly, St. Thomas shows that curiosity also appears when there is a disorder both in the desire to know and in the effort used to acquire the truth and exposes four ways:

7 “[...] perfectio hominis videtur consistere, ut intellectus eius de potentia reducatur in actum, quod fit per cognitionem veritatis”.

8 “[...] appetitus vel studium cognoscendae veritatis potest habere rectitudinem vel perversitatem”.

First, when a man is withdrawn by a less profitable study from a study that is an obligation incumbent on him; hence Jerome says (*Epist. XXI ad Damas*): “We see priests forsaking the gospels and the prophets, reading stage-plays, and singing the love songs of pastoral idylls”. Secondly, when a man studies to learn of one, by whom it is unlawful to be taught, as in the case of those who seek to know the future through the demons. This is superstitious curiosity, of which Augustine says (*De Vera Relig.*, 4): “Maybe, the philosophers were debarred from the faith by their sinful curiosity in seeking knowledge from the demons”. Thirdly, when a man desires to know the truth about creatures, without referring his knowledge of him to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God. Hence Augustine says (*De Vera Relig.*, 29) that “in studying creatures, we must not be moved by empty and perishable curiosity; but we should ever mount towards immortal and abiding things”. Fourthly, when a man studies to know the truth above the capacity of his own intelligence, since by so doing men easily fall into error: wherefore it is written (*Ecclus. 3: 22*): “Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability... and in many of His works be not curious”, and further on (*Ecclus. 3: 26*), “For... the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, co.).⁹

9 Uno modo, in quantum per studium minus utile retrahuntur a studio quod eis ex necessitate incumbit. Unde Hieronymus dicit, sacerdotes, dimissis Evangeliiis et prophetiis, videmus comoedias legere, et amatoria bucolicorum versuum verba cantare. Alio modo, in quantum studet aliquis addiscere ab eo a quo non licet, sicut patet de his qui aliqua futura a Daemonibus perquirunt, quae est superstitiosa curiositas. De quo Augustinus dicit, in libro *de vera Relig.*, nescio an philosophi impedirentur a fide vitio curiositatis in percunctandis Daemonibus. Tertio, quando homo appetit cognoscere veritatem circa creaturas non referendo ad debitum finem, scilicet ad cognitionem Dei. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro *de vera Relig.*, quod in consideratione creaturarum non est vana et peritura curiositas exercenda, sed gradus ad immortalia et semper manentia faciendus. Quarto modo, in quantum aliquis studet ad cognoscendam veritatem supra proprii ingenii facultatem, quia per hoc homines de facili in errores labuntur. Unde dicitur *Eccli. III*, altiora te ne quaesieris, et fortiora ne scrutatus fueris, et in pluribus operibus eius ne fueris curiosus; et postea sequitur, multos enim supplantavit suspicio eorum, et in vanitate detinuit sensus eorum.

In the answers to the objections, the Common Doctor clarifies that the supreme happiness consists in the knowledge of the highest truth and not of any truth, as Aristotle had taught. Consequently, there can be disorder in the knowledge of certain things if it is not ordered to the knowledge of the supreme truth, in which perfect happiness is found. It also indicates that, although the knowledge of the truth is good in itself, this does not prevent a man from misusing the knowledge of truth for an evil purpose, or from desiring the knowledge of truth inordinately, since even the desire for good should be regulated in due manner (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, ad 2). Finally, St. Thomas says that, although the study of philosophy is, by itself, good and laudable, certain philosophers abused that knowledge to challenge the faith.

In article 2 of the same question, Aquinas affirms that sensitive knowledge can also be affected by the vice of curiosity; firstly, if it does not focus on something useful and, rather, it removes the man from some useful consideration and, secondly, if sensitive knowledge is directed towards something bad, such as seeing a woman to lust for her or take an interest for the lives of others to denigrate them. To all this, St. Thomas adds, citing St. Augustine, that curiosity even seeks objects that are contrary to those that voluptuousness might seek.

And as he says further on: “By this it may more evidently be discerned wherein pleasure and where in curiosity is the object of the sense; for pleasure seeketh objects beautiful, melodious, fragrant, savory, soft; but curiosity, for trial’s sake, seeketh even the contraries of these, not for the sake of suffering annoyance, but out of the lust of experiment and knowledge” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 167, a. 2, ad 1).¹⁰

¹⁰ “Et sicut Augustinus ibidem subdit, «ex hoc evidentius discernitur quid voluptatis, quid curiositatis agatur per sensus, quod voluptas pulchra, suavia, canora, sapida, lenia sectatur; curiositas autem etiam his contraria, tentandi causa, non ad subeundam molestiam, sed experiendi noscendique libidinem»”.

In short, the vice of curiosity has its basis in the object that it is a question of knowing and in the motive of the desire to know, since, like all appetite, the appetite for knowledge must be regulated by practical reason.

Manifestations of curiositas in contemporary academic research

Blumenberg (1985) studied how the legitimation of curiosity has its origin in the Modern Age. Although it may differ from its views of Christianity or the Middle Ages – Since, it attributes to Christianity a primacy of faith that would lead to a departure from reason. Thus, it is reduced to a mere instrument of collaboration in which Christianity did not fully trust, its description of the process by which curiosity is legitimized is very accurate.

Blumenberg (1985) describes three levels of curiosity in history. The first would be the curiosity that he calls «naïve», of the ancients, who wanted to know everything, without worrying about more. The second, the «shy» curiosity, would correspond to the end of the Middle Ages, when the new sciences discovered all their potential and their possibility of self-confirmation. Thus, he points out that the dynamic of self-confirmation freed curiosity from the connotations of a basic instinct that ties man's attention to superficial matters, to wonders, to monstrosities – indeed, to curiosities. The third stage of curiosity, already in the modern world, is the self-awareness of curiosity itself. This is, now, cultivated in itself, as a researcher's own virtue.

Modernity itself tells of the factors that made this step towards the search for knowledge possible without any regulation, without order. Curiosity could only be rehabilitated and legitimized by freeing it from its preoccupation with superfluous things. It had to be taken to the central enclosure of human care. This, however, could only be carried out through two events: first, the appearance of Protestantism, which removed the concern for the salvation of the soul from the sphere on which a person had disposition, that is, on his free decision and desire. On the other hand, in Modernity, the

world as a creation could not continue to be related to man as the manifestation of divine providence, nor could man understand it as Revelation. It was hermeneutically inaccessible, as if it had become mute. In this way, the attitude towards the world could no longer be pre-formed by the object. The constitution of the objects of theory was now accomplished under the conditions previously possessed by man in a system of concepts and hypotheses, just as the constitution of the objects of practice was accomplished exclusively from the point of view of the power of disposition acquired in a given moment of time. Thus, what can be studied by man now is simply what he can fit into his system of concepts and hypotheses. A priori knowledge now becomes the measure of the world (MacIntyre, 2002).

The element of care becomes central to curiosity in the modern world. Modern man must act as if God did not exist. He cannot know God or his will. And he cannot leave his life in the world in parentheses either. The human being discovers himself, then, as the being that must take care of himself and nature. Since he has emerged as the lord of the world, it is up to him to find out how it works and how he can control it.

Modernity is the vindication of curiosity because this implies, basically, a lack of interest in the truth itself. In fact, as Blumenberg (1985) points out, the increasing institutionalization of theoretical activity in the form of science, of work carried out by an immanent logic, allows the theoretical process to appear less and less conditioned by reasons (Inan, 2011). That is, the advance of universal knowledge, of all knowledge, of all curiosity that provides satisfaction in intellectual circles. Knowing more and more and rejoicing in that knowledge seems to be the only and ultimate goal.

In general, there is a strong tendency to consider intellectual work as something separate, detached from the personal life of the academic researcher. In this sense Guitton (1992) is pronounced when he maintains that under each of its aspects, intellectual work has relationships with deep life. The intelligentsia should not be separated from the spirituality. I know very well that we have lost the sense of these relations between the intelligence and the soul. And

our time suffers from this separation that has allowed between technique and mind.

The ethical dimension of human action refers, precisely, to the undeniable presence of the personal ethos in every company that the human being decides to carry out, with what is positive or negative about it. *Ethos* is a greek word that means *way of being* or *character*. Man is an ethical being because he is capable, from his freedom, of configuring his way of being, his personal ethos. If temperament is what is received by nature, the *ethos* is the fruit of the person's free choices, that is, man builds a way of being chosen on the non-chosen temperament. All human activity is, fundamentally, ethical: it proceeds from a personal way of being and, simultaneously, it consolidates and reaffirms that way of being.

Therefore, it is evident that the intellectual life is nourished by the *ethos* of the academic researcher and, reciprocally, influences the constitution of his way of being, of his character. Apparently, this anthropological and ethical dimension of the research has not been sufficiently studied and there is a risk of trivializing the research if it is not based on a complete and comprehensive anthropological conception, which raises the levels of ethical demand for all academic researchers (Shils, 2008). In what follows, some manifestations of *curiositas* in contemporary academic research will be enunciated and analyzed, as a preliminary step to the presentation of its remedy through the virtue of *studiositas*, the subject of the last section.

A first manifestation of *curiositas* as a vice related to the appetite for knowledge is verified in the desire for honors and glory that, for many researchers throughout the world, is above the desire for truth and good. The act of seeking above all applause and praise—which is a matter of ambition and vainglory, vices thematized by St. Thomas in II-II of the *Summa Theologiae*—seriously hinders the encounter with the truth and, therefore, on the other hand, the fear of not being admitted in certain circles, admired, invited or cited in scientific productions leads, gradually, to agree with the lie; for example, when, despite being true and having arguments that support them, certain ideas are silenced because they are politically incorrect or those that are precisely politically correct are defended, acting as

the sophist who sells his ideas and his words to the highest bidder in exchange for perks and gifts.

As can be seen, curiosity and pride are intimately related. According to St. Thomas, pride is the vice that consists in the inordinate desire for one's own exaltation (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 162, a. 2). Self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency are the essential traits of a character marked by pride. These are two attitudes that are especially conducive to diverting the spirit from the truth. With regard to self-satisfaction, it must be said that, if prestige, renown, is the most appreciated and sought after good, it is logical that it is in this that the proud person takes pleasure and not in the truth as such. Self-sufficiency, on the other hand, is an erroneous conviction and a vehement desire not to need anyone's help. "This is the outcome of an inordinate desire for his own excellence, since a man is ready to believe what he desires very much" (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 162, a. 3, ad 2).¹¹

Second, it is necessary to refer to the study of less useful or less urgent subjects in contexts that require the researcher to deal with social and cultural problems of the utmost importance. In the realm of the Humanities, for example, many intellectuals consider that the issues that most plausibly affect society are not scholarly enough to occupy their time in them, making humanistic disciplines a matter of closed circles disconnected from society. Social life and the feelings of the specific people with whom they live daily. It is evident that this attitude cannot but generate a reasonable social contempt that will increasingly distance the common man from contemplation and study while the academy contributes little or nothing to the solution of the most pressing problems to the point of transforming itself. Precisely, in part of the problem, for example, with the ideologization of universities and its multiple consequences in citizen life.

The interest in knowing the truth has its seat in the volitional power, not in the intellective faculty. It is not a good of the understanding but of the will, in its free want-to-know, when none of the circumstances of this peculiar volition makes it morally

11 "Quod contingit ex inordinato appetitu propriae excellentiae, quia quod quis vehementer desiderat, facile credit".

reprehensible. The interest in the knowledge of moral truths can be immoral in all the occasions in which it occupies an objectively pertinent time to the practice of some other task. On all occasions, the opinion of prudence determines whether the cognitive interest is morally admissible or reprehensible because of when and how it is exercised (Papastephanou, 2017). Prudence not only takes into account the temporary circumstance of human behavior but all the other circumstances derived from it. Therefore, the virtue of prudence determines whether the exercise of the cognitive interest is specifically morally admissible or inadmissible, but prudence would lack moral sense if it were not mutually involved with the other moral virtues (temperance, fortitude and justice).

The more or less explicit denial of the theological dimension of reality and the conscious avoidance of the theological problem constitutes a third form of *curiositas*, insofar as the knowledge of creatures is not ordered to its due end, that is, to the knowledge of God, even closing the path of knowledge to higher realities and/or maintaining hostility towards them.

What would it be for a university not to be Godless in this way? Its curriculum would have to presuppose an underlying unity to the universe and therefore an underlying unity to the inquiries of each discipline into the various aspects of the natural and the social. Over and above the questions posed in each of these distinct disciplinary inquiries —the questions of the physicist or the biologist or the historian or the economist— there would be questions about what bearing each of them has on the others and how each contributes to an overall understanding of the nature of things. Theology would be taught both for its own sake and as a key to that overall understanding. And it would be a central task of philosophy in such a university to inquire into the nature of the relationship between theology and the secular disciplines (MacIntyre, 2009: 17).

The evolution of universities towards a growing separation between sciences and disciplines developed simultaneously with the

privilege granted by Modernity to the exact sciences and to the disciplines considered useful for progress. Reflections of a metaphysical, religious or ethical nature are placed at a clear disadvantage within this new hierarchy of knowledge. Theology is being relegated or disappearing in many university environments because it does not adapt to the canons of the modern university. Its social usefulness or its contribution to scientific and technological development is not immediately perceived (Buitrago, 2017).

As the fourth manifestation of *curiositas* in contemporary academic research, it is necessary to mention the very frequent habit of undertaking investigations that exceed the intellectual capacity of the researcher or his knowledge. In many *curricula vitae* it is read that the person has researched on multiple topics and has published a striking number of articles and books, but, unfortunately, in most of these cases, these are topics that have already been sufficiently studied or superficial approximations that do not reach to the bottom of the matter. It is not strange that some academic researchers take on projects that are above their capacities only to obtain funding or because of the ambition and pride already mentioned, paying off the sophist Hippias, disconcerting due to his many knowledge (Pieper, 1952). This phenomenon is closely linked to facts that are becoming more and more frequent in universities. For example, there are cases of professors in charge of guiding a large number of theses who, in fact, do not accompany them. Usually, they abandon the students to their fate, but, anyway, they keep the academic credits as directors. In addition, they receive payment for work to which they did not really contribute. Likewise, there are concrete cases of research in which a professor appears as principal investigator without having made a real contribution to a task that, in practice, has been carried out entirely by his students. This matter involves, to a certain extent, committees of research juries who have previously been promised to appear as co-authors of the book that would be published with the content of the thesis they evaluate. This type of action, therefore, makes them judge and jury of the text in question.

Fifth, *curiositas* currently manifests itself when researching about issues that do not contribute to the common good and, rather, spread

moral evil. On many occasions, researchers write about grotesque and rugged topics with striking and scandalous titles just for the purpose of being published and that there are many readings or views of their texts that are recorded through the sophisticated means offered by the Internet (Irizar, 2012).

Specifically, *curiositas* as a harmful use of knowledge to challenge faith is very present in current academic research, therefore, far from a serious and elevated debate about the most relevant questions of Theodicy and Apologetics or Fundamental Theology, which appears is a crusade against religion that censors any argument to the contrary and is totally alien to the academic character that the discussion on these very important matters should have. Not to mention the twisted ways in which believing intellectuals are persecuted or claimed that there is no place for religion in college life. With this in mind, it is possible and necessary to proceed to the last section of this work, in which it will be proposed that *studiositas* as a virtue forcefully remedies the pathologies of academic research already described and that constitute various manifestations of *curiositas*.

Studiositas as a remedy for the pathologies of academic research

Moral virtue has been defined by Aristotle as a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is, as the prudent man would determine it. And it is a mean state between two vices, one of excess and one of defect (*EN* II.6, 1106b, 35 – 1107a, 1).

A life conforming to the being of man makes necessary all the virtues and, among them, prudence is the one that gathers in itself the reason for all the moral virtues, combining them as appropriate in each action. However, it is evident that man needs a series of knowledge to know how to act at all times; not only a general knowledge of the world, of what things are, but also of good and evil, of the circumstances surrounding the action of man and academic research is one of those circumstances.

Studiositas is a remedy for the desire for praise and honor insofar as it remembers and inclines the researcher to the pursuit of the good, disposing him to renounce ambition and pride in a magnanimous attitude that gives priority to the honor of the truth over reputation or human respect, since “the magnanimous is intent on doing great deeds in every virtue, in so far, to wit, as he tends to what is worthy of great honors” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad 1).¹² A great example of this attitude that links *studiositas* with *magnanimitas* was given by the great French geneticist Jérôme Lejeune when, knowing that this would mean losing the Nobel Prize in Medicine, he opposed abortion in a UN debate. This was neither the first nor the last affront this heroic man would receive. One of the most difficult to assimilate was the one he suffered in 1982, when his research grants were withdrawn. Through the application of a law that prohibited medical professors from practicing for more than twelve years, they left him without a laboratory and without equipment, but that law only applied to him and three of his colleagues, while other researchers who incurred the prohibition, they continued without any problem with their projects (Lejeune, 1997). In this regard, it is important and urgent to train students at all levels of education. In university life, especially, a genuine love of truth should be inculcated that overcomes the banal desire for recognition and applause. This can be achieved, for example, by making them aware of the postulates of people like Jérôme Lejeune who defended his principles and the freedom of his conscience against ideological impositions and political pressures that are quite common in the academic world today. Lejeune, with admirable courage, wanted to put his freedom at the service of truth, and, although he was never invited again to an international genetics congress, that fact left his commitment to the cause of life unalterable. Simply, with serene fortitude, he followed his path without worrying about political correctness (Lejeune, 1997).

12 “[...] magnanimus intendit magna operari in qualibet virtute, in quantum scilicet tendit ad ea quae sunt digna magno honore”.

Secondly, *studiositas* offers solid criteria to discern which are the most important and urgent issues in a given context, taking into account their usefulness, but also taking into account the discipline of study, the position, the assigned responsibilities and the state of the question. One of the causes of the excess of academic information is that the same research topics and the same contents are repeated for the mere desire to publish, there are so many important issues that go unnoticed or are despised for not recognizing their importance or because they do not agree to trends in academic research. *La vita è bella* (Benigni, 1997) contrasts the virtuous attitude of Guido, who seeks all means to save himself from death and, above all, to save his son —while he manages to prevent him from finding out that they are in a Nazi death camp—, with the *curiositas* of Dr. Lessing, who being a friend of Guido and being able to help him escape, is indifferent to this situation and only turns to Guido to help him solve a riddle that has haunted him since few days ago. It is important that the academic researcher avoid falling into the implicit or explicit pressure of «publish or die» that leads him to publish for the sake of publication, and for merely pragmatic purposes, on topics in which the personal and common good is not taken into account, nor it is a criterion of choice. Thus, it is perceived that, many times, the social projection of a certain research topic is reduced to a pragmatic and utilitarian understanding of social life in which the topics of the humanities, for example, have no place. This is also an aspect that requires review and reflection in university life.

A third remedy of the *studiositas* is given in the face of the denial of God and the avoidance of the theological problem in the investigation that constitutes a lack of intellectual honesty on the part of those who incur this form of *curiositas* described by Saint Thomas. It is not said here that teaching or research must necessarily become apologies for religion, but rather that there must be openness to the theological issue when it arises in the study of any discipline of knowledge. In this, the *studiositas* is linked to the *docilitas*, a virtue that is part of prudence and that implies a sincere openness to the truth, the will to want to see, understand and, ultimately, agree to the truth regardless of where it comes from. The virtue of *docilitas*

consist of the good will of the pupil to open his mind to the light of teaching; to make himself receptive of truth even before it has been evidently seen by his intellect of him; at least, it is the will not to behave as a *protervus* (Gilson, 1964). Faced with the theological problem, there should be no type of prevention or rejection and, in this regard, all perspectives should be listened to and discussed without fear, on pain of sacrificing the authenticity of academic research and its ultimate goals, which are the encounter with the truth and the achievement of moral good.

Authors such as Kelsey (2009) and Sánchez (2019) suggest re-taking the globalizing character of the medieval university, which was achieved through the initiation of all students in philosophy and liberal arts. It is in this context that a university paradigm of general studies arises, which responds to the approaches of university institutions with a humanistic perspective oriented by theology as the supreme science. Telling his experience in the American university, Pieper (1979) wondered if an institution of higher education without a faculty of theology could be considered a university.

Faced with the arrogance of those who want to undertake investigations that exceed their abilities and knowledge, the *studiositas* refers to the truth about their own competences and reminds that nothing should be valued more in intellectual life than the encounter with the truth. Humility is, therefore, the virtue that is most profoundly and definitively linked to investigative work. It is, in fact, the virtue that most connaturalizes man with the truth, since by humility man lives in the truth. You can only be studious, that is, acquire the virtue of *studiositas*, if you are humble, which implies restraining the passion of hope so that you do not want goals of knowledge that are beyond your own capacities, to know yourself same, taking into account human and professional possibilities, the availability of time and means, that is, to measure one's own forces without pessimism, but with realism, with truth. This issue is especially important with regard to the amount of intellectual work of the university researcher in relation to the time available to carry it out, since, many times, teaching and accompanying students are sacrificed to achieve results

in research projects, which contradicts the mission of the university and puts the person in second place with respect to the processes.

In relation to certain forms of academic corruption, a rigorous control is necessary to verify that the work reported by professors is genuine and verifiable in reality. In the case of thesis supervision and research groups, some parameters and supervision systems are required to guarantee that the tutors and research advisors offer a more effective accompaniment to the students in their research process. In this way, advisors would be prevented from taking advantage of their position of power and incurring in abuses as an academic authority. This should serve as a mechanism to stay on the path of fulfilling their duty based on honesty and ethics. It would avoid, in this context of the investigation, profiting from the academic work of others.

Finally, compared to *curiositas* in its aspect of diffusion of evil, *studiositas* constitutes a remedy insofar as it vindicates moral good as telos of knowledge. Knowledge that does not contribute to the moral excellence of the person is harmful. “There are ignorances that enrich the mind and knowledge that impoverishes it” (Gómez, 2005: 39; traduction from spanish by the authors).¹³ In this sense, *studiositas* is necessarily linked to justice, “habit whereby a man renders to each one his due to him by a constant and perpetual will” (*S. Th.*, II-II, q. 58, a. 1, co.).¹⁴ The duty of the researcher is to contribute to the encounter with the truth and the common good, and the right of those who come to their investigations to train is precisely to find the truth and nourish themselves with information and ideas that contribute to their moral improvement. This is especially important in relation to younger students, since a lot of tact and prudence is required when it comes to allowing them certain knowledge for which they are not prepared or that they cannot process well because they lack the necessary budgets. In this sense, you have to be very careful and reverent as a researcher and, especially, as a teacher.

13 “Hay ignorancias que enriquecen la mente y conocimientos que la empobrecen”.

14 “[...] habitus secundum quem aliquis constanti et perpetua voluntate ius suum unicuique tribuit”.

As part of temperance, the *studiositas* includes the restraint of the desire to know. This desire naturally encompasses everything and without any measure. By reinforcing other appetites, your movement becomes more impetuous. When a person wishes to take revenge, the exercise of knowledge is strongly impelled to set out to discover the best way to carry out his purpose. In this sense, all passion requires an exercise of knowledge (Vásquez, 2009). The greater that passion and the more disordered with respect to right reason, the greater will be the requirement of the desire to know towards the object of passion. With this it is reaffirmed that without one virtue the others cannot exist. There is no prudence without moral virtues, nor moral virtues without prudence. Thus, it is necessary to control the passions, especially the concupiscible appetite, in the case of *studiositas*, so that the mind applies itself with serenity to what man needs most at all times and, permanently, as a habit, to happiness, which is the end of your life.

Conclusions

To a large extent, the desire to know defines the dynamics of human life. At first glance, it might be thought that there is no object of knowledge that is not worthy of man and, *sensu stricto*, this is so, since truth is the good of the understanding. However, it is also true that man is born in a certain context and with specific functions that he must perform in a certain time, he must live according to his own being in very precise circumstances, which is why he cannot know everything, simply he does not have time for it and is therefore obliged to choose his objects of knowledge. On the other hand, you must bear in mind that, ultimately, the *raison d'être* of knowledge is the realization of the practical good and that, for example, it must respect limits in the knowledge process, such as those relating to the privacy of people. No one can claim the right to interfere in private life under any pretext.

Based on these essential truths, the first conclusion of this work is that the desire for knowledge must be ordered by reason. Man's

openness to reality does not occur in a truly human way if it becomes pure consumerism or dilettantism, that is, if it consists of experiencing everything indiscriminately and with maximum intensity. The first thing is to know what we are, to worry about looking for the origin of our being and our ultimate goal. They are the fundamental questions of humanity since it exists. The *studiositas*, precisely, is the moral virtue through which the knowledge that allows man to live a good life is achieved and the vice that opposes it is *curiositas*, disorder in the object of knowledge, in the ways of knowing or in the purpose of knowledge.

All the manifestations of *curiositas* are very present in contemporary academic research, which is why the analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas regarding this vice is extremely topical. The desire for recognition and honor as the end of research, the study of the least useful in contexts that demand attention to certain urgent topics, hostility to Theology as the supreme science, the approach to issues that exceed the capacities of the researcher or their Possibilities and an obsession with the vile and execrable aspects of the human condition are very evident manifestations of *curiositas* in contemporary academic research. The *studiositas*, insofar as it claims that the purposes of knowledge are the truth and the good, turns out to be the remedy for these pathologies and the way in which this healing process occurs has been clearly expressed in this text.

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