



Thomas Aquinas' influences in Infante D. Pedro' "Virtuosa Benfeitoria": Scholastic tradition in History and History of Education

Terezinha Oliveira

Departamento de Fundamento da Educação, Centro de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes, Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Av. Colombo, 5790, 87020-900, Maringá, Paraná, Brasil. E-mail: toliveira@uem.br

ABSTRACT. The considerations on the book "Virtuosa Benfeitoria" aim at evaluating the relevance of a social project to guide the actions of the ruler and the individuals, with a view to practical actions that converge to the common good. The infant D. Pedro, also known as the Duke of Coimbra, wrote the work. The central focus of the book is to address the sense of improvement and how the prince should practice and bestow it and how the subjects would receive and practice it. The arguments of D. Pedro to deal with the good and the society are strongly influenced by classical authorities and authors of scholasticism, especially Thomas Aquinas. In this sense, on the one hand our study seeks to show that such knowledge was essential for him to understand the plots that build human relationships, whose premises, to him, should be the ones leading society towards the common good; on the other hand, the goal is to analyze the work we regard as essential theoretical and methodological principles of history that allow us to recover, through memory, historical events that potentially guide us through paths that show the relevance of the Master of the University, as a vector in the organization of a given society.

Keywords: scholastic, virtue, D. Pedro, government, Thomas Aquinas.

Influências de Tomás de Aquino em a 'Virtuosa Benfeitoria' do Infante D. Pedro: a Tradição Escolástica na História e na História da Educação

RESUMO. As reflexões sobre o livro Virtuosa Benfeitoria têm por objetivo considerar a relevância de um projeto de sociedade para nortear as ações do governante e dos indivíduos com vistas a práticas de ações que converjam para o bem comum. A obra foi escrita pelo infante D. Pedro, também conhecido como duque de Coimbra. O foco central do livro é tratar do sentido de benfeitoria, de como o príncipe deveria praticá-la e outorgá-la e como os súditos a receberiam e a praticariam. Os argumentos de D. Pedro, para tratar do bem e da sociedade, sofrem forte influência das autoridades clássicas e de autores da escolástica, especialmente Tomás de Aquino. Nesse sentido, nosso estudo, por um lado, procura evidenciar que esses conhecimentos foram fundamentais para que ele compreendesse as tramas que constroem as relações humanas cujas premissas, para ele, devem ser aquelas que conduzem a sociedade para o bem comum; por outro, para analisar a obra, reputamos como essenciais os princípios teóricos e metodológicos da história que nos permitem recuperar, por meio da memória, acontecimentos históricos que, potencialmente, orientam-nos para caminhos que evidenciam a relevância do mestre, da universidade, como vetores de organização de dada sociedade.

Palavras-chave: escolástica, virtude, D. Pedro, governo, Tomás de Aquino.

Influencias de Tomás de Aquino en la 'Virtuosa Benfeitoria' del Infante D. Pedro: la Tradición Escolástica en la Historia y en la Historia de la Educación

RESUMEN. Las reflexiones sobre el libro 'Virtuosa Benfeitoria' tienen por objetivo considerar la relevancia de un proyecto de sociedad para guiar las acciones del gobernante y de los individuos con miras a las prácticas de acciones que converjan para el bien común. La obra fue escrita por el Infante Don Pedro, también conocido como Duque de Coimbra. El foco central del libro es tratar del sentido de benfeitoria (mejoramiento), de cómo el príncipe debería practicarlo y otorgarlo y cómo los súditos lo recibirían y lo practicarían. Los argumentos de Don Pedro, para tratar del bien y de la sociedad, sufren fuerte influencia de las autoridades clásicas y de autores de la escolástica, especialmente Tomás de Aquino. En este sentido, nuestro estudio, por un lado, busca evidenciar que estos conocimientos fueron fundamentales para que él

comprendiera los enredos que construyen las relaciones humanas cuyas premisas, para él, deben ser aquellas que conducen la sociedad para el bien común; por otro, para analizar la obra, consideramos como esencial los principios teóricos y metodológicos de la historia que nos permiten recuperar, por medio de la memoria, acontecimientos históricos que, potencialmente, nos orientan para caminos que evidencian la relevancia del Maestro, de la Universidad, como vectores de organización de una dada sociedad.

Palabras clave: escolástica, virtud, D. Pedro, gobierno, Tomás de Aquino.

Introduction

In this exhibition, we examine the government's proposal, with a view to the common good, presented by D. Pedro (1392-1449), in the work *O livro da virtuosa benfeitoria* (Book of the Virtuous Wisdom – free translation), and consider to what extent it would have been influenced by the scholastic conception of ruling made by the master Thomas Aquinas (1224 / 25-1274).

In Aquinas, we found the close link between the Aristotelian formulations and the Holy Writ, which show how society should be organized and governed with a view to the common good. In the writings of D. Pedro, infante of Portugal in the first half of the fifteenth century, we realize that the moral and political issues raised by scholasticism are a theoretical source for this Portuguese ruler. They present a project of society in which the medieval theoretical principles subsidize the construction of what would be characterized as the revival of Portuguese Kingdom in the Middle Ages. In his work, Pedro assimilates the scholastic formulations and proposes that the kingdom was organized so that the society had hierarchy, order and especially unit, i.e. principles that would ensure it a political organization, as proposed by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, which would lead men to a state of a 'perfect' community. Our principal sources for this study are two questions of the *Summa Theologica*, which served, along with other issues of the *Summa*, as basis for the thought of D. Pedro: the Question of Piety (II-II, 101) and the Question of Respect (II-II, 102). The text *Do Reino de Chipre* by Thomas Aquinas, and the *O livro da virtuosa sabedoria* by D. Pedro, were also used. Thus, reading the latter, many questions were raised about its structure and purpose. For many scholars, its purpose is to serve as a mirror for the prince, addressing his brother, King Duarte (1391-1438), of whom he was counselor. For others, the work is a text for the nobility, in order to establish guiding principles of behavior and social interaction. However, the proximity between the text of Pedro and the writings of Thomas Aquinas drew our attention, especially in regards to social organization from a hierarchical principle, which is visible in times of construction, organization and systematization of

society. In this regard, the Dominican master and the Infante resume the Platonic ideas, and above all, the Aristotelian concept of community, especially the city as a 'perfect community'. Both agree on the premise that, for the existence and harmony of society, men, particularly the leaders, must be aware that their actions should converge to the common good. In Thomas Aquinas, everyone needs to learn the moral and social virtues, especially the monarch, who should have them and practice them in the daily acts of governance. For Pedro, men should do good to establish coexistence in society. However, it would be up to the king to take actions always with a view to the common good, so that the 'benefit' was ensured to everyone.

According to Peter Calafate ([199?], p. 1), the "[...] theme of the benefit and human mutual aid as part of their social existence also has a distinct political dimension, since the powerful are who have more conditions to practice the free and voluntary benefit [...]". For Pedro, the term 'benefit' would be the action of the men whose purpose is to help each other, as all live in society and need the social bond, which the author defines as 'mutual aid'.

Given the close relationship between the works of Master Aquinas and the *O livro da virtuosa benfeitoria*, we observe that the knowledge produced by the Scholastic master remained and spread in society two centuries after his role as a professor at the University of Paris. Suffering strong influence of thomsonian works, the book of D. Pedro has scholasticism in its most developed and accurate form, which characterized the entire thirteenth century. In the case of D. Pedro, the relevance of the thinkers of antiquity is very strong "E assy este liuro que per entender meu e uontade e do leçençado que compôs e fez delle a mayor parte acordadas com dictos de sêneca e douctores em elle alegados [...]" (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 530). This passage is part of the presentation of the work. However, what interests us is the fact that he recognized the authors, on who he relied, as the inspiring authorities of wisdom.

When faced with the work of D. Pedro *O livro da virtuosa benfeitoria*, we detect its scholastic character and how it appropriated the writings of ancient authors, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and other medieval ones, such as Augustine of Hippo and

Thomas Aquinas. A question we posed was if it was written by someone who had been at the university or even by a university teacher.

Therefore, these two issues, the influence of Thomas Aquinas and the scholasticism in the work of Pedro, and the origins of Portuguese university as a possible element of predominance in the intellectual formation of this author, mapped the central axis of this work, which was organized in specific items.

Aquinas and questions on Respect and Mercy¹

We initially note that these two issues are inserted in the reflections that the master Thomas weaved about the behavior of people in society, exactly why they are part of the set termed 'social virtues'. Thus, we must understand them from the concerns that this intellectual explicit about the actions of men when they live together. Thus, it is by thinking the person under the Aristotelian perspective, in other words, as a being that exists in and for the Common, that he considers the city a 'perfect community'. Therefore, the city life requires men to establish ways of acting that are in line with the city life. It is under this aspect of the 'new' act of men that their formulations allow us to make approaches to the *O livro da virtuosa sabedoria*; after all, Pedro expresses the same concern as the master Thomas, as he discusses the value of virtue for life in society to succeed. Indeed, even if the writings are from different historic times and are addressed to distinct recipients, since Thomas Aquinas, writing about the social virtues that are part of the *Summa theologica*, addressed the monks who belong to the mendicant orders, and his students at the Paris University, and Pedro addressed King Duarte to advise him on how to better govern, both were founded on guiding people to live virtuously so that they could promote the common good in society.

The starting point of master Thomas was to consider that the ruler should be someone who could maintain and drive the community to its end, that is, to the good, as Pedro indicated in his work, two centuries after Thomas' reflections. For the Dominican master, the ruler of the city, which is the space where all would share with everyone, would be the "[...] King; and who rules the house is said to be a father and not a king. He has, however, 'similarity to a king', resulting sometimes that kings are called fathers of the people" (Tomás de Aquino,

Do Reino ..., c. III, § 7, emphasis added)². The idea presented by him is that, in any group of people, a ruler is necessary. For the city, in which relationships are complex, the 'leader' should be a virtuous person in the extreme, since he should be the example for all, though the responsibility of housefathers are no less important than the King's are. Precisely because the presence of the ruler or father is important for the organization and maintenance of social relations that Pedro bases himself in the writings of Thomas Aquinas to guide King Duarte on the virtues that he should have to produce 'improvement' in the Portuguese kingdom. Among them, it is possible to infer the importance of the virtues of Piety and Respect, as discussed by the Scholastic master.

According to the two authors, as men live in community, piety, which is close to the idea of love thy neighbor, is a virtue that should accompany them in their closer relations and different levels of relationship. In this sense, the master analyzes piety from a man's relationship with his relatives, with his peers or fellow citizens and with God. In these different relationships, men practice piety, because it is what allows the coexistence with each other.

Reflection on the virtue of mercy is in question 101 (ST IIa - IIae). In the first article, the Master explains the importance of devotion to social life. "This is why after God, man is the ultimate debtor of parents and country. [...] And in the cult of fatherland is included worship to all citizens and all friends of the fatherland. That's why compassion extends to all of these on a priority basis" (Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica*, II^a - II^{ae}, q. 101, a. 1., rep.).

As life in the city makes men dependent on each other, among the virtues, piety is, in this relationship of dependency, one that enables more unity among all men. According to the master, as men can only exist in community, this condition makes them debtors of each other. Of course, the levels of relations and dependence are different, but this difference vanishes when practicing piety, because all deserve reverence and piety.

From this same perspective of existence in itself is that Aquinas highlights the fact that men should be pious towards the country, because it determines our lives. If the country is at peace, we have a condition of harmonious existence; it is at war when our condition is adverse. Thus, the master calls our attention to the fact that the state government directly interferes in our lives, because we do not live alone, and the acts of the ruler and the

¹ We inform the reader that we have already addressed these thomsonian issues in other opportunities. We mention, in particular, an article entitled *A piedade e o respeito em Tomás de Aquino: virtudes para a vida cidadã no século XIII*.

² We inform the reader that we are translating all excerpts from Thomas Aquinas and other authors but we are keeping D. Pedro excerpts in the original language.

community people directly interfere in the daily lives of all; it is the public, common, universal, influencing the singular, individual “[...] It should be said that compassion extends to the country as the homeland is for us a certain principle of our existence [...]” (Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica*, II – II, q. 101, a. 3).

According to the master, as the existence of men without distinction depends on the family, the country, the ruler, piety constitutes a special virtue because everyone has duties to all and it is in this provision of a service to others that piety is effective in society. Again, Aquinas expresses the common nature of men, since we only exist in relation to others, be it a family member, a neighbor, a stranger or a ruler.

The second issue of Master Thomas that we highlighted to reflect upon the proximity between Aquinas reflections and the work of Pedro’s is the Question 102, ‘Respect’. Respect, along with piety, is linked to the social virtues that men should practice in their daily lives. “Now, a person established in dignity is as a principle of government in certain areas: for example, the head of the city in the affairs of civilian life, the head of the army in the field of military operations, the master in the field of teaching, and so on” (Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica*, II^a – II^{ae}, q. 102).

It is important to note the closeness that Aquinas established between the virtue of compassion and respect. According to the Master, men should pity and respect all people with whom, somehow, they have acquaintance. However, this connection becomes sharper as the person to which we allocated our respect is the provider of our lives. Thus, although from the premise that people should respect everyone, due to the direct relationships that people have with others, he establishes a hierarchy that should guide the instances of respect. As an example of these differences, he mentions God, parents, teachers, governors and the military, and explains that, in one way or another, these people are the ones we have more relationships with, that we are more dependent of, and are also to whom we have more duties.

For Aquinas, people must especially respect the rulers, for they are the ones who, invested with power to drive, can bring good to the community. The community, in turn, must recognize the superiority of its rulers, their dignity and recognize that ruling is an art.

ANSWER. It is those who are constituted in dignity to govern subjects. To govern is to move people in the direction of due order. So, the pilot steers the

ship leading it to port. Now, everyone who moves has, with respect to what is moved, a certain superiority and a certain power. [...] While the subjects render obedience to his command and seek to respond to their benefits as their means (Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica*, II^a – II^{ae}, q. 102, a. 2., rep.).

The ruler, in turn, should lead society with respect to provide it with benefits, to the extent of his possibilities. Thus, to the Dominican master, even if the ruler is worthy of respect, by subjects, he must in turn also respect the ruled; therefore, the relationship between the ruled and the ruler must be guided by compassion and the respect. This question, in our view, is close to the work of D. Pedro.

By comparing the proximity between the virtue of piety and respect, master Thomas explains why we should practice piety in relation to God and parents and, in relation to the ruler, profuse respect.

It is clear that our parents and all those connected to us by blood ties are united with us in a much more substantial way than people constituted in dignity; in fact, the generation and education, whose principle is the father, concern us much more substantially than the outside government, whose principle is those who are established in dignity. In this regard, compassion overcomes respect because it worships the people who touch us more closely and with whom we have more obligations (Tomás de Aquino, *Suma teológica*, II^a – II^{ae}, q. 102, a. 3, rep.).

For the Dominican master, we owe piety and respect towards our parents because they are the ones that generated us and have provided our existing. Therefore, these relations should have more substantiality. Regarding the ruler, we must also have compassion and respect, but these virtues are from the dignity that the ruler exercises and the fact that he is responsible for the common good of the community, but these relationships are established at the level of sociability and not of kinship.

By weaving these comparisons, Aquinas explains that life in common requires all people to pity and respect. However, the intensity of our virtues is linked to the degree of the proximity we have with each other, the recipient of our actions. It is as if we were born debtors of compassion and respect towards our parents and God, but in relation to the ruler, only respect and compassion to the extent and proportion that he respects and has pity for us. Therefore, our actions and feelings depend on the relationships established in the community.

The University of Portugal

The considerations that we will weave about the University in Portugal are intended to point out some indications of how this institution of knowledge appeared organized and structured in the autumn of the Middle Ages.

According to José Mattoso, the fact that the university in Portugal was founded in the late thirteenth century reveals that it had not gone through the long process of consolidation and disputes as with other universities in the beginning of the century; therefore it did not experience the struggles for the consolidation of the Aristotelian thought in the Christian West.

When, in 1288, the prelates of Alcobça, Santa Cruz de Coimbra and other religious houses and Portuguese churches ask the pope to confirm their willingness to append their income to the General Study of Lisbon, the European university movement had already completed its initial, charismatic and intensely innovative phase (Mattoso, 1997, p. 5).

At the end of the thirteenth century, when it takes its first steps in many other regions, universities had already been established as institutions and their teachers and students were already identified as singular characters in relation to other social segments.

Numerous historical documents attest to this 'independence' that the main European universities had achieved in recent decades. The Sorbonne Statutes are one of the examples we can mention, since they systematize how students and teachers should live and care for the good of the 'home' as well as to regulate as how the university should relate to the outside community of the city (Denifle, 1899, p. 505-507 - Letter 448 (1274), free translation). Above all, what should be preserved at 'home' was the 'good' of the community that inhabited this University.

The scenario in Portugal was not distinct from Europe about the importance of the University. However, the first university to be founded in Portugal was the 'General Study' founded by the document *Scientiae thesaurus mirabilis* in Lisbon, 1290. In it, it was taught Arts, Civil Law, Canon Law and Medicine. The bill also stated that theology should be taught in the convents of the Dominicans and Franciscans.

According to Cruz (1981, p. 263), the foundation date of the Portuguese University by King D. Dinis, in Lisbon, was for a long time considered uncertain. Two dates were indicated: November 12, 1288 and August 9, 1290.

The first date is of the issuance of the letter in which several prelates of religious orders and secular churches communicated to the Pope Nicholas IV that they had made an agreement with D. Dinis for incomes of several churches that were entrusted to them, and of which the king was the patron, which were applied in the foundation of General Study in Lisbon (Pimenta, 1982, p. 196). The second date is of the bill *De statutegni Portugaliae* by the same pope and addressed "[...] to the University of masters and scholars of Lisbon". According to Pimenta, the pope's bill would be an indication that, to date, there was a General Study in Lisbon, that is, the University had been founded.

In addition to these two documents, a third is known, dated March 1st, 1290, in which King Dinis, alluding to the General Study that he decided to found, promises safety and security "[...] to all who are studying or who want to study there in the future" (Cruz, 1981, p. 264).

About two years after the university was transferred to Coimbra, for the first time, in 1308, D. Dinis ordered the statutes by which it should be governed (Provision of February 15, 1309). The name of these statutes is *Charta magna privilegiorum*. Before the founding of the University, we found some evidence to show the first facts that go toward the establishment of a university. Thus, in 1269, there is the first public lesson in Alcobça. Some news confirm the intention of D. Dinis to create a university in Portugal.

The mentioned events allow us to say that Portugal lived, albeit in a different way, a process similar to what other parts of Europe were living with their state organization process, which raised the need to establish educational institutions that formed exemplary men to meet new needs. Therefore, if Portugal opened to the rest of Europe, it was because, internally, it needed the same institutions like the University to pursue its political and social organization.

According to Saraiva (1950), the period between the last quarter of the twelfth and the second half of the fourteenth centuries is mainly characterized by the absence of a national center of gravity. By not constituting a nucleus of culture, Portugal received the reflection of European culture, especially the Castilian. However, as the state and society were organized around the maritime cities and their bourgeois population, structured by an increasingly strong central authority, the culture was also taking root in the territory of the Kingdom of Portugal.

This reality, described by Saraiva and Mattoso on the situation of the university between the late

thirteenth and throughout the fourteenth centuries, certainly influenced the Infante Dom Pedro to worry about the intellectual and cultural development in Portuguese society in the first half of the fifteenth century. According to Mattoso: “The recommendations of the Infante D. Pedro, who in his famous ‘letter of Bruges’ recommends the creation of colleges like those that existed in French and English universities [...]” (Mattoso, 1997, p. 28, emphasis added).

Therefore, what can be seen from the reflections on the university in Portugal stresses the importance of D. Pedro. He was a traveler in Europe, a nobleman who attended the Italian university, who performed translations of ancient authors like Cicero, who read Aristotle, Seneca and Aquinas, and intended, with his actions and writings, to promote ‘progress’ in the Portuguese nation.

O Livro da Virtuosa Benfeitoria

As we consider the work of Pedro one of educational nature - because, although addressed to the prince, deals with issues that relate to the set of social relations in the Portuguese kingdom in the first half of the fifteenth century - constitutes, in fact, an important source for understanding the formative project of society as a whole. According to Frade (2011, p. 106), the *O livro virtuosa benfeitoria* is a milestone in the history of Portuguese literature, “Considered the first Treaty on philosophy and moral and ethical policy written in Portuguese language, this work had a didactic intention with secular background, as it was intended to be a conduct guideline for a Prince”.

By indicating, in writing, how the prince should behave, in all of his actions, Pedro explains how he was worried about the ways the ruler would take to govern his subjects, exactly the reason why the prince would need consolidated moral and intellectual training, in order to drive his actions. It is noteworthy that Pedro, also known as the Duke of Coimbra, was regent of his brother D. Duarte between the years 1439-1448, and only ceased to be so a year before his death; therefore, he knew the political entrails of the kingdom of Portugal.

O livro da virtuosa benfeitoria is not only a manual of conduct or a ‘mirror’ for the prince, since its author not only knew well the fundamentals of politics, ethics and good governance, as he uses in numerous times the works of Aristotle, Seneca and Aquinas, but he possessed, with property, the theoretical and practical knowledge that he intended to teach Duarte.

Because of this knowledge, we can say, in line with Frade (2011), that D. Pedro meant that the

king should always act with ‘good ordinance’. For the author “[...] Pedro lectures [discourses?] not only on the value of the benefits, but also about politics, justice, education, the responsibilities of kingship or spiritual life, for example” (Frade, 2011, p. 107).

Thus, the starting point of the *O livro virtuosa benfeitoria* is the ordinance for good. The author sets this project through the knowledge possessed by the ancient authors, especially Aristotle, Seneca and Thomas Aquinas. The proposal by D. Pedro was guided by the idea of virtuosity, so it did not conceive a king who did not have wisdom and virtue. The work brings up the concern to show how much the attitudes of the ruler should be examples for other men. The central idea is that the king can grant benefits to their subjects; these, in turn, should be able to be good receivers, or, as he says, good recipients. From the point of view of the Duke of Coimbra, every person who has the condition of intelligence is able, by his or her actions, to make improvement to the other.

Sempre a nobre uoontade traz consigo desejo, para bem fazer prestando a outrem. ‘Toda perssoa que he obrigada’ pera possuyruirtudes, heneçessariamentetheuda, a usar de seus auctos segundo requere seu stado e abraçe seu poder. E pois nos somos obrigados per precepto pera amar deos e os prouiximos mostrasse que lhe deuemos benquerença, da quall se segue o aucto da benffeytura, de que somos theudos a usar com aquelles que o ammeter. A ijrazomhe esta. Cada hua cousa hetheuda a fazer aquello que a suuirtuosa natureza requere. E segundo diz o philosopho toda anymalia ama a que ellahe semelhante (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 576-577, emphasis added).

Thus, the power and availability for good are not only priorities of the ruler, but of all who live in community, that is, of all people living in society. Resuming Aristotle, D. Pedro points out that if men are similar to each other, they have to love their equal / next, and ‘benefactor’ would be the expression of this love in action. We must deduce the aforementioned passage where the author points out that the ‘benefactor’ is a result of wisdom, so you need to be able to practice ‘benefactor’ to your neighbor. Furthermore, this ‘benefactor’, which we can also set as good [deeds?], is provided to the ‘other’, according to what we know and to the condition each one occupies in a given social relationship. This is exactly why the prince should be aware that all his actions should promote *benfeitoria* to his subjects, and that other men should be aware that their actions would generate in the

'other' a given reaction.

The *benefitoria*, however, reveals that life in society is a circular relation in which people, by doing well to others, potentially could also become good. For D. Pedro, human relations were based on a commitment, for which there had always been a good action that converge to another good action. This is explicit in the example where he presents the relationship between children and parents and between students and teachers.

[...] E assy o padre outorga ao filho susubstancia sobre o que he fundado todo bem que elle pode fazer. E aquella natureza hebenefiçio do geerador. E porem pois que nenhuu da a outrem per modo de benefiçio o que he seu. E as substancias dos filhos som dos geeradoresseguesse que os filhos e todallas cousas que a elles pertencem som benffeyturias dos padres. E portanto por cousa que lhe façam nom diremos que os filhos danbenefiços aos padres. Em confirmaçomdestohehualley, que diz que o edificio feyto em terra alhea, a ella perteençe. E assy o bem do filho perteençe ao padre ao qual lhe a sua natureza (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 580).

For D. Pedro, by caring for their children, parents give them benefits that also made them able to promote the benefits to others. The same would happen with university teachers. To impart knowledge to students, to instill in them the wisdom, they promote the benefit of good. Therefore, both children and students graduate in line with the benefits that they received from 'adults', people responsible for instilling in them ways of doing things that would make them capable of promoting benefits for future generations. Relations between ordinary men, as the relationship between the prince and his subjects, if promoted by the benefit, would enable a society with the 'right' harmony. In this sense, all social practices in principle would be for the good.

The proximity of this conception of society with the proposals of Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Thomas Aquinas, is visible not only in matters of social virtues - Respect and Charity - but also in the *Do Reino ou Do Governo dos Príncipes ao Rei de Chipre*. In both authors, although in very different historical times, life in society presupposes the exercise of human actions aimed at the common good. Human activity presupposes the daily habit of practicing actions that always aim at the good in the perfect community that, for them, would be the city.

The proposal by D. Pedro, imbued with the 'spirit' of good that was already established in the previous two historic times, could lead us to conclude that it would be utopian, and from the 'mind' of an also utopian philosopher. However, one

must consider that the author was regent of the kingdom for nine years, havingexperienced the art of governing himself and being aware of the men the prince would need to save his kingdom.

This insight is evident when, in the fifth book of the work, Pedro reflects on human vices. He begins the book highlighting how people want what the other has, that is, how much they envy others. "E portanto quem tem molher graciosa, nom deixa porem de poer seu desejo em outra que tenha mayorfremosura. E andando uestido de panos prezados nom tira cobyça dos que lhe mais prazem" (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 738).

Serving of a scholastic authority, Saint Bernard, Pedro calls the prince's attention that subjects are never satisfied so they may be bad recipients. Because of this eternal dissatisfaction of men, Pedro advises the prince would need to be aware regarding the granting of benefits because men always want more than they have and will never be satiated.

In addition to envy, men can have other vices that will also be very serious for the kingdom. He highlightsindiscretion.

E o primeyrorramohe chamado indiscreçom, de que usam muytos ao tempo presente, e nomsguardando que antredesuayradoserrores, dos que uiuem sem rrazoado conselho, a desordenança de bem fazer he acostumada, nem conhecendo que nom sabem dar benefiços, nem os receber, e que em agradecimento nom som auisados, fazem que a benffeytura pereça de todo (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 740).

For Pedro, the indiscreet cannot receive benefits because they do not allow these benefits to do wellforothers, since their actions will promote discord among people and not make it likely that the good will prevail in the kingdom, as they do not spread the goodness, but only want 'fame'. For the Duke of Coimbra, the indiscreet also have the vice of selfishness because they think only of themselves.

Another vice deemed as serious, in the author's evaluation, and to which the prince should not give benefits, concerns those who covet other people's things and wish for themselves all others possess.

E rrequerendo sem merecer o que pode seusar, mostra grande myngua do que nomhemester. Este pecado hemuytosquyadoro, que segundo screpuesampaulo a tymotheu, todollosuícios tomam umoresdaquestarraiz porque som governados. [...] portanto diz seneca em humaespistulla, que o mais pequeno e mais ligeyro caminho pera homem seerrryco, he desprezar as rriquezas. [...] E peyorhe desejar o que outrem tem. E muytopeyor falsamente requerer o que outrem com deryttraz em sua posse (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 241).

This passage is significant to thinking about the common good of the project presented by D. Pedro, because by ‘coveting’ what the other has, one hardly looks at what he has himself. Another aspect of the passage that we must consider as part of his project is when, resuming Seneca, he draws attention to the importance of humility.

Thus, the benefits of the kingdom cannot be given to anyone, but only to those who can receive and make ‘use’ of these for the good, or to people who have virtues, or as he says, are good. Consequently, the author tells the prince the characteristics of these subjects.

E sguardaremos qual he o boomesteyroso, simprez, discreto, gracioso, sisudo, nomenueioso do alheo, nem auarento do seu. E pois a uenturya lhe nom deu benefiços, leixando a nos que lhe acorrêssemos, piadosamenteoolharemos por ele. E aynda que todalhas cousas a ele faleçam, pera dar agradecimento per obra semelhante, o seu boocoraçom nunca mynguara, em dar aquellas graças a que he obrigado (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 241).

Only people who have a predisposition for good, that are not jealous and act with a view to the good, are worthy to receive the benefits of the prince; they will be able to promote more benefits in society and, therefore, to produce the common good through their actions. Thus, it is necessary to care for the benefits so that they are not lost. “Destes uiçiosos modos nos guardaremos, por nom serem perdidos os benefiços ante que sse façam, nem perteeçe de sse fazerem aquy mais rreprehensooes, sobre aquelles que taes males usam” (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 740-742). About possible losses of the ‘gift’ of the benefit, it is necessary to highlight an important aspect in relation to the prince’s action. For D. Pedro, concerning the benefits involving material things, the losses are not as severe as when one realizes that the person is not a ‘good’ receiver, since it is possible to recover the benefit. “Mas os bees outorgados, que som heranças e dinheyros, e cousas semelhantes, ligeiramente se podem reuogar. E portanto dizem alguus, que os benefiços se podem rromper [...]” (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 739-740). Indeed, although they can cause problems, material donations are reversible, but when the *benfeitoria* involves what we understand as administrative functions and political positions, when they are given to people who do not seek the common good, it would be essential that the benefit should not be given, as this generates the absence of good in

society “E porem a benffeyturiaque non he corporal, ficastauel e nom movediça, queia se nom pode fazer, queeste nom desse, e aquelle nom rrecebesse” (Pedro, Duque de Coimbra, 1981, p. 739-740). Thus, the advice of D. Pedro to the prince is that, with regard to the *benfeitorias* that require a principle of good, they can only be granted to those who are known to have no vices so that good circulate in society. Exactly why, for D. Pedro, he who donates the benefit and anyone that receives the benefit should be people aware of the responsibility that each must play in the society / kingdom.

Concluding remarks

The analysis of *O livro da virtuosa sabedoria* allowed us to reflect on the political and educational sense of a writing, which had as main project the guidance of the prince. Therefore, the people, by acting so that all their acts converge for the common good, enable us to think about how it is important for a given society the existence of a project aimed at the common good. Moreover, it is also important to consider that the proposals that seek to guide the society for good, from the actions of the ruler and individuals, require that the author(s) /intellectual(s) have wisdom and make use of history to have as parameter the examples of other times to guide the actions of men and particularly the existence of a ‘place’ for special knowledge, such as the University. Finally, knowledge of ancient authors, and especially Thomas Aquinas, was instrumental so that D. Pedro could present its society project to King D. Duarte

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