

QUESTION 59

The Relation of the Moral Virtues to the Passions

Next we have to consider the distinction of the moral virtues from one another. And since those moral virtues that have to do with the passions are distinguished in a way corresponding to the diversity of the passions, we must consider, first, the relation of virtue to the passions (question 59) and, second, the distinctions among the moral virtues according to the passions (question 60).

On the first topic there are five questions: (1) Is a moral virtue a passion? (2) Can a moral virtue exist along with a passion? (3) Can a moral virtue exist along with sadness? (4) Does every moral virtue have to do with some passion? (5) Are there moral virtues that can exist without any passion?

Article 1

Is a moral virtue a passion?

It seems that a moral virtue is a passion:

Objection 1: The mean belongs to the same genus as the extremes. But a moral virtue is a mean among the passions. Therefore, a moral virtue is a passion.

Objection 2: Since *virtue* and *vice* are contraries, they are in the same genus. But certain passions are called vices, e.g., envy and anger. Therefore, certain passions are virtues.

Objection 3: Pity (*miser cordia*) is a passion, since, as was explained above (q. 35, a. 8), pity is sadness over bad things that happen to others (*tristitia de alienis malis*). But Cicero, the great orator, did not hesitate to call pity a virtue, as Augustine reports in *De Civitate Dei* 9. Therefore, a passion can be a moral virtue.

But contrary to this: *Ethics* 2 says that the passions are neither virtues nor vices (*neque virtutes neque malitiae*).

I respond: A moral virtue cannot be a passion. There are three reasons why this is clear:

First of all, as was explained above (q. 22, a. 3), a passion is a certain movement of the sentient appetite. But a moral virtue is not a movement; instead, it is a principle of an appetitive movement, a certain existent habit.

Second, the passions do not in their own right (*ex seipsis*) have the character *good* or *bad*. For the good or bad for a man has to do with reason, and so the passions, considered in themselves, are related to the good and the bad to the extent that they are capable of harmonizing or not harmonizing with reason. But nothing like this can be a virtue, since, as was explained above (q. 55, a. 3), a virtue is directed only toward the good.

Third, even if there is a passion that is in some fashion directed only toward the good or only toward the bad, still, the movement of the passion, insofar as it is a passion, has its beginning in the appetite itself and its terminus in reason, where the appetite's tendency conforms to reason. But the movement of a virtue is in the opposite direction, having its beginning in reason and its terminus in an appetite insofar as the appetite is moved by reason. This is why, in giving the definition of a moral virtue, *Ethics* 2 says, "A virtue is an elective habit consisting in a mean determined by reason, in the way that a wise man will determine it."

Reply to objection 1: A virtue is a mean between the passions not in its *essence* (*non secundum suam essentiam*), but rather in its *effect* (*secundum suum effectum*), since it sets up a mean between the passions.

Reply to objection 2: If what is being called a vice is a habit according to which one acts badly, then it is clear that no passion is a vice. On the other hand, if what is being called a vice is a sin, i.e., a vicious act, then nothing prevents a passion from being a vice in this sense or, conversely, from being concomitant with an act of virtue, depending on whether the passion is contrary to or in conformity with

the act of reason.

Reply to objection 3: As Augustine puts it in the same place, pity is called a virtue, i.e., an *act* of virtue, insofar as “that movement of the mind is obedient to reason, so that pity is offered in such a way as to preserve justice, as when someone needy is given money, or as when someone who is repentant is forgiven.” On the other hand, if ‘pity’ means a *habit* by which a man is perfected in having reasonable sorrow, then nothing prevents pity from being called a virtue. And the same line of reasoning holds for similar passions.

Article 2

Can moral virtue exist along with a passion?

It seems that moral virtue cannot exist along with a passion:

Objection 1: In *Topics* 4 the Philosopher says, “A gentle man is one who does not experience passion (*non patitur*), whereas a patient man is one who experiences passion and is not carried away.” And the same line of reasoning holds for all the moral virtues. Therefore, every moral virtue exists without passion.

Objection 2: As *Physics* 7 says, a virtue is an upright state of the soul (*recta habitudo animae*), like health is of the body. Hence, as Tully puts it in *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus*, “Virtue seems to be something like the health of the soul.” The passions, by contrast, are called “certain sicknesses of the soul,” as Tully says in the same book. But health is not compatible with sickness. Therefore, neither is virtue compatible with a passion of the soul.

Objection 3: Moral virtue requires the perfect use of reason even in particular matters. But this is impeded by the passions; for in *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, “Sensory pleasures corrupt the judgment of prudence (*corrumpunt existimationem prudentiae*),” and in *De Coniuratione Catilinae* Sallust says, “When they, i.e., the passions of the mind, get in the way, it is not easy for the mind to perceive the truth.” Therefore, moral virtue cannot exist along with a passion.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine says, “If the will is perverse, these movements that it has, viz., the movements of the passions, will be perverse, whereas if the will is upright, then the movements will not only be non-culpable, but will even be praiseworthy.” But nothing praiseworthy is excluded by moral virtue. Therefore, moral virtue does not exclude the passions but can exist along with them.

I respond: As Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 9, on this topic there was a disagreement between the Stoics and the Peripatetics.

The Stoics claimed that the passions of the soul cannot exist in one who is wise or virtuous, whereas the Peripatetics, whose sect Aristotle founded (as Augustine reports in *De Civitate* 9), claimed that the passions can exist along with moral virtue, as long as they are brought back to a mean.

As Augustine remarks in the same place, this difference is more a verbal difference than a difference in their views. For since the Stoics did not draw a distinction between the *intellective* appetite, i.e., the will, and the *sentient* appetite, which is divided into the irascible and the concupiscible, they did not distinguish, in the way the Peripatetics did, the passions of the soul from other human affections by claiming that the passions of the soul are movements of the sentient appetite, whereas the other affections, which are not passions, are movements of the intellective appetite, which is called the will. Instead, they claimed only that ‘the passions’ are any affections that oppose reason. If they arise as a result of deliberation, then they cannot exist in one who is wise or virtuous, whereas if they arise suddenly, then this can happen in one who is virtuous, because, as Augustine reports the words of Gellius in *De Civitate Dei* 9, “the mind’s visions, which they call ‘fancies’ (*quae appellant phantasias*), are not

such that it is within our power whether they sometimes arise in our mind; and when they arise from fearful things, they necessarily move the mind of one who is wise, so that he is slightly startled by fear or depressed by sorrow as long as these fancies prevent the use of reason; and yet the wise do not approve of these fancies or consent to them.”

So, then, if what is being called a ‘passion’ is a disordered affection, then, as the Stoics claimed, passions cannot exist in the virtuous individual in such a way that he consents to them after deliberation. On the other hand, if what is being called a ‘passion’ is any movement of the sentient appetite, then passions can exist in the virtuous individual to the extent that they are ordered by reason. Hence, in *Ethics 2* Aristotle says, “Some describe virtue as being a state of impassivity and rest (*determinant virtutes impassibilitates quasdam et quietes*); this is incorrect, because they are speaking in an unqualified way. Instead, they should say that the virtues are a respite from passions that are not as they should be and that occur when they should not occur.”

Reply to objection 1: The Philosopher uses this example, like many others in his books on logic, not in accord with his own opinion, but in accord with the opinion of others.

Now the opinion expressed here was that of the Stoics, viz., that the virtues exist without the passions of the soul. This is an opinion that the Philosopher rules out in *Ethics 2*, when he claims that the virtues are not states of impassivity (*non esse impassibilitates*).

Still, one could reply that in “the gentle man is one who does not experience passion,” “passion” should be understood as “disordered passion.”

Reply to objection 2: This argument, and all the similar arguments that Tully puts forth in *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus 4*, have to do with the passions insofar as ‘passions’ signifies disordered affections.

Reply to objection 3: If a passion that precedes reason’s judgment prevails in the mind to the extent that it is consented to, then it impedes reason’s deliberation and judgment. On the other hand, if the passion follows upon reason’s judgment and is, as it were, commanded by reason, then it aids in the execution of reason’s command.

Article 3

Can virtue exist along with sadness?

It seems that virtue cannot exist along with sadness (*cum tristitia*):

Objection 1: According to Wisdom 8:7 (“She”—i.e., divine wisdom—“teaches sobriety and justice, prudence and virtue”), the virtues are the effects of wisdom. But “the conversation of wisdom has no bitterness,” as we read afterwards (Wisdom 8:16). Therefore, neither can the virtues exist along with sadness.

Objection 2: As is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics 7* and 10, sadness is an obstacle to operation. But an obstacle to a good operation is contrary to virtue. Therefore, sadness is incompatible with virtue.

Objection 3: Sadness is a sort of sickness of the soul, as Tully calls it in *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus 3*. But a sickness of the soul is contrary to virtue, which is a good condition of the soul. Therefore, sadness is contrary to virtue and cannot exist along with it.

But contrary to this: Christ was perfect in virtue. But there was sadness in Him, as Matthew 26:38 reports (“My soul is sorrowful even unto death”). Therefore, sadness can exist along with virtue.

I respond: As Augustine reports in *De Civitate Dei 14*, the Stoics claimed that in the mind of one who is wise there are three *eupatheiai*, i.e., three good passions, in place of three perturbations, viz., *will (voluntas)* in place of avid desire (*cupiditas*), *joy (gaudium)* in place of *mirth (laetitia)*, and *caution*

(*cautio*) in place of fear (*metus*).

By contrast, they denied that there can be anything in the mind of the wise man in place of sadness—and this for two reasons:

First, sadness has to do with something bad that has already happened. But they believe that nothing bad can happen to a wise man, since they believed that, just as a man's only good is virtue and no corporeal goods are among a man's good, so the only thing bad for a man is what is ignoble (*inhonestum*), which cannot exist in a virtuous man.

However, this argument is unreasonable. For since a man is composed of a soul and a body, whatever contributes to conserving the body's life is something good for a man—though not the greatest good, since he is able to use it badly. Hence, something bad that is contrary to this good can exist in a virtuous man and induce a moderate sadness. Furthermore, even if there can be a virtuous man without grave sin, there is nonetheless no one who leads a life without any less serious sins—this according to 1 John 1:8 (“If we say that we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves”). Third, even if a virtuous man did not have sin now, he might have had sin at some time in the past. And it would be praiseworthy for him to be sad about this—this according to 2 Corinthians 7:10 (“The sorrow that is in accord with God brings about steadfast penance unto salvation”). Fourth, it is likewise praiseworthy to be sad about the sin of another. Hence, in the same way that moral virtue is compatible with other passions that are moderated by reason, it is likewise compatible with sadness.

Second, they were moved by the fact that sadness is directed toward a present evil, whereas fear (*timor*) is directed toward a future evil, just as pleasure is directed toward a present good, whereas desire is directed toward a future good. Now it can pertain to virtue that someone should enjoy a good that he has or that he should desire a good that he does not have, or even that he should be wary of a future evil (*etiam malum futurum caveat*). But it seems altogether contrary to reason that a man's mind should be depressed by a present evil, and hence sadness cannot exist along with virtue.

However, this argument is unreasonable. For as has been explained, it is possible for something bad to be present to a virtuous man. But reason detests anything bad. Hence, the sentient appetite follows reason's hatred in that it is saddened over something bad of this sort—yet in a moderate way, in accord with reason's judgment. Now as has been explained (a. 1), it pertains to virtue that the sentient appetite should be conformed to reason. Hence, as the Philosopher says in *Ethics 2*, it pertains to virtue that one should be moderately sad over things that one should be sad about. And sadness is also useful for fleeing from evils. For just as goods are sought more promptly because of pleasure, so evils are more forcefully fled from because of sadness.

So, then, one should reply that sadness directed toward what accords with virtue cannot exist along with virtue, since virtue delights in what belongs to it. But virtue is moderately saddened by those things that are in any way incompatible with virtue.

Reply to objection 1: From this passage one can infer that the wise man is not saddened by wisdom. Yet he is saddened by what impedes wisdom. And so in those who are blessed in heaven (*in beatis*), in whom there can be no impediment to wisdom, sadness has no place.

Reply to objection 2: Sadness impedes an operation about which we are sad, but it assists us in more promptly executing those things through which sadness is fled from.

Reply to objection 3: Immoderate sadness is a sickness of the soul, but moderate sadness belongs to the good condition of the soul in the state of the present life.

Article 4

Does every moral virtue have to do with the passions?

It seems that every moral virtue has to do with the passions:

Objection 1: In *Ethics 2* the Philosopher says, “Moral virtue has to do with pleasures and pains (*circa voluptates et tristitias*.)” But as was explained above (q. 23, a. 4 and q. 31, a. 1 and q. 35, aa. 1-2), pleasure (*delectatio*) and pain (*tristitia*) are passions. Therefore, every moral virtue has to do with the passions.

Objection 2: As *Ethics 1* says, what is rational through participation is the subject of the moral virtues. But as was explained above (q. 22, a. 3), this is the part of the soul in which the passions exist. Therefore, every moral virtue has to do with the passions.

Objection 3: In every moral virtue one can find some passion. Therefore, either all the moral virtues have to do with the passions or none of them do. But as *Ethics 3* says, some virtues, such as fortitude and temperance, have to do with the passions. Therefore, all moral virtues have to do with the passions.

But contrary to this: As *Ethics 5* says, justice, which is a moral virtue, does not have to do with the passions.

I respond: Moral virtue perfects the appetitive part of the soul by ordering it toward the good of reason. But the good of reason is that which accords with moderated or ordered reason. Hence, it is possible for moral virtue to have to do with whatever can be ordered and moderated by reason.

Now reason not only orders the passions of the sentient appetite, but also orders the operations of the intellectual appetite, i.e., the will, which, as was explained above (q. 22, a. 3), is not a subject of passions. And so not every moral virtue has to do with the passions. Rather, some have to do with the passions and some have to do with actions (*circa operationes*).

Reply to objection 1: Not every moral virtue has to do with pleasures and pains as its *proper matter*, but instead every virtue has to do with them as something that *follows upon* its proper act. For every virtuous individual delights in the act of a virtue and is pained by a contrary act. Hence, after the quoted passage, the Philosopher adds, “... if the virtues have to do with actions and passions; but every action or passion is followed by pleasure or pain, and because of this virtue will have to do with pleasures and pains,” viz., as something that *follows upon* virtue.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained, what is rational through participation includes not only the sentient appetite, which is the subject of the passions, but also the will, in which no passions exist.

Reply to objection 3: Some virtues have the passions as their proper subject matter, whereas others do not. Hence, as will be shown below (q. 60, a. 2), it is not the case that the same line of reasoning holds for all the virtues.

Article 5

Can a moral virtue exist without any passion?

It seems that a moral virtue can exist without any passion:

Objection 1: The more a moral virtue overcomes the passions, the more perfect it is. Therefore, in its most perfect *esse*, it exists altogether without the passions.

Objection 2: Each thing is perfect when it is removed from its contrary and from what inclines it toward its contrary. But the passions incline one toward sin, which is contrary to virtue; hence, in

Romans 7:5 the passions are called “passions of sins.” Therefore, perfect virtue exists without any passion.

Objection 3: As is clear from Augustine in *De Moribus Ecclesiae*, it is through virtue that we are conformed to God. But God acts without passion. Therefore, the most perfect virtue exists without any passion.

But contrary to this: As *Ethics* 1 says, “No man is just who does not rejoice in just actions.” But joy is a passion. Therefore, justice cannot exist without passion, and *a fortiori*, the same holds for the other virtues.

I respond: If, as the Stoics posited, what we are calling ‘passions’ are disordered affections, then it is clear that a perfect virtue exists without any passions.

On the other hand, if what are calling ‘passions’ are all the movements of the sentient appetite, then it is plain that those moral virtues that have to do with the passions as their proper matter cannot exist without the passions. The reason for this is that, given the Stoic view, it would follow that moral virtue renders the sentient appetite altogether superfluous. But it does not pertain to virtue that the powers that are subject to reason should be deprived of their own acts; rather, what pertains to virtue is that those powers should execute reason’s command by engaging in their proper acts. Hence, just as a virtue orders the members of the body toward the appropriate exterior acts, so it orders the sentient appetite toward its own well-ordered movements.

On the other hand, those moral virtues that have to do with actions and not with the passions can exist without the passions (and justice is a virtue of this type), since through these virtues it is the will that is applied to its proper act, which is not a passion. Yet joy (*gaudium*), which is not a passion, does follow upon an act of justice, at least in the will. And if this joy is increased by justice’s being perfected, then there will be an overflow of joy even into the sentient appetite, given that, as was explained above (q. 24, a. 3), the lower powers follow the movement of the higher powers. And so because of an overflow of this sort, the more perfect the virtue is, that more it causes a passion.

Reply to objection 1: A virtue overcomes disordered passions, but produces moderate passions.

Reply to objection 2: Passions that are disordered lead one into sinning, but if they are moderate, the passions do not lead one into sinning.

Reply to objection 3: The good in each thing is thought of in a way corresponding to the status of its nature. Now in God and in the angels there is no sentient appetite, as there is in a man. And a good action belonging to God or to an angel exists altogether without passion, just as it exists without a body, whereas a man’s good action exists with passion, just as it exists with the help of a body.