QUESTION 141

Temperance

Next we have to consider temperance (*temperantia*): first, temperance itself (questions 141-142); second, the parts of temperance (questions 143-169); and third, the precepts that belong to temperance (question 170).

Concerning temperance, the first thing we have to consider is temperance in itself (question 141) and, second, the vices opposed to temperance (question 142).

On the first topic there are eight questions: (1) Is temperance a virtue? (2) Is temperance a specific virtue? (3) Does temperance have to do only with desires (*concupiscentiae*) and pleasures (*delectationes*)? (4) Does temperance have to do only with the pleasures of touch (*delectationes tactus*)? (5) Does temperance have to do with the pleasures of taste (*delectationes gustus*) insofar as it is taste or only insofar as it is a kind of touch? (6) What is the rule associated with temperance (*regula temperantiae*)? (7) Is temperance a cardinal, i.e., principal, virtue? (8) Is temperance the most important of the virtues?

Article 1

Is temperance a virtue?

It seems that temperance is not a virtue:

Objection 1: No virtue is incompatible with an inclination had by our nature, because, as *Ethics* 2 says, "There is a natural aptitude in us for virtue." But temperance backs away from pleasures, toward which, as *Ethics* 2 says, nature inclines one. Therefore, temperance is not a virtue.

Objection 2: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 65, a. 1), the virtues are connected with one another. But there are some who have temperance without having the other virtues; for there are many who are temperate and yet are avaricious or cowardly (*avari vel timidi*). Therefore, temperance is not a virtue.

Objection 3: As is clear from what was said above (*ST* 1-2, q. 68, a. 4), for each virtue there is a corresponding gift [of the Holy Spirit]. But there does not seem to be any gift that corresponds to temperance, since, in what has gone before (see qq. 8, 9,19, 45, 52, 71 and 139), all the gifts have already been assigned to other virtues. Therefore, temperance is not a virtue.

But contrary to this: In *Musica* 6 Augustine says, "That is the virtue which is named *temperance*."

I respond: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 55, a. 3), it is part of the nature of a virtue to incline a man toward the good. But as Dionysius explains in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, the good of a man is "to exist in accord with reason." And so a human virtue is a virtue that inclines one toward existing in accord with reason. But, obviously, temperance inclines one toward this, since its very name implies a certain sort of moderating or tempering that is done by reason. And so temperance is a virtue.

Reply to objection 1: Nature inclines each individual toward what is appropriate for him. Hence, a man naturally desires the pleasure that is appropriate for him. However, since a man as such is rational, it follows that the pleasures that are appropriate for a man are those that are in accord with reason. And temperance draws him back not from those pleasures, but instead from pleasures that are contrary to reason. Hence, it is clear that temperance is not contrary to any inclination of *human* nature, even though it *is* contrary to the inclination of a *bestial* nature that is not subject to reason.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as it contains the nature of a virtue perfectly, temperance does not exist without prudence, which every corrupt individual lacks (*qua carent quicumque vitiosi*). And so those who lack other virtues and who are subject to the opposed vices do not have the temperance which is a virtue, but instead perform acts of temperance either (a) out of a certain *natural disposition*—since,

as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 63, a. 1), certain imperfect virtues are natural to men—or (b), as was likewise explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 58, a. 4 and q. 65, a. 1), out of a *disposition acquired by practice*, which, without prudence, does not have the perfection of reason.

Reply to objection 3: There is indeed a gift [of the Holy Spirit] that corresponds to temperance, viz., *fear* [*of the Lord*], by which one keeps the pleasures of the flesh under his control (*quo aliquis refrenatur a delectationibus carnis*)—this according to Psalm 118:120 ("Pierce my flesh with your fear").

Now the gift of fear has mainly to do with God, whom it avoids offending, and on this score, as explained above (q. 19, a. 9), it corresponds to the virtue of *hope*. Secondarily, though, it can have to do with whatever an individual flees from in order to avoid offending God. But a man especially needs the fear of God in order to flee from the things that attract him the most, and it is those things which temperance has to do with. And so the gift of fear corresponds to *temperance* as well.

Article 2

Is temperance a specific virtue?

It seems that temperance is not a specific virtue:

Objection 1: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says that temperance involves "one's serving God with wholeness and without corruption (*Deo sese integrum incorruptumque servare*)." But this belongs to every virtue. Therefore, temperance is a *general* virtue.

Objection 2: In *De Officiis* 1 Ambrose says, "What one sees and seeks in temperance is especially tranquility of mind." But this pertains to every virtue. Therefore, temperance is a *general* virtue.

Objection 3: In *De Officiis* 1 Tully says, "The beautiful (*decorum*) cannot be separated from the morally upright (*honestum*), and everything that is just is beautiful (*iusta omnia decora sunt*)." But as he says in the same place, the beautiful is properly thought of in the case of temperance. Therefore, temperance is not a specific virtue.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 2 and 3 the Philosopher posits temperance as a *specific* virtue.

I respond: According to customary human speech, some common names are restricted to the principal things among those that are contained under the name's commonness, in the way that the name 'the city' is taken antonomastically for Rome.

So, then, there are two ways in which the name 'temperance' can be taken:

(a) In one way, *according to its common signification*. And if it is so taken, then temperance is a *general* virtue and not a *specific* virtue, since the name 'temperance' signifies a sort of tempering, i.e., moderating, which reason introduces into human acts and human passions and which is common to every moral virtue. Yet *temperance* differs in nature from *fortitude* even insofar as each of them is taken as a *common* or *general* virtue (*etiam secundum quod utraque sumitur virtus communis*). For temperance *draws one back from* those things which attract the appetite in a way contrary to reason, whereas fortitude *impels one forward toward* enduring or attacking those things because of which a man runs away from the good of reason.

(b) On the other hand, if temperance *is thought of antonomastically*, insofar as it holds the appetite back from those things that attract a man most of all, then it is a *specific* virtue in the sense of having a specific subject matter, in the same way that fortitude does as well.

Reply to objection 1: A man's appetite is corrupted most of all by those things which lure a man into receding from the rule of reason and of divine law. And so just as the very name of temperance can be taken in two ways—first, in the sense of what is *common* or *general* and, second, in the sense of what is *exceptional* (*uno modo communiter, alio modo excellenter*)—so, too, with wholeness (*integritas*),

which Augustine attributes to temperance.

Reply to objection 2: The things that temperance has mainly to do with are able to disquiet the mind most of all, because, as will be explained below (aa. 4-5), they are essential to a man. And so tranquility of mind is attributed to temperance because of a certain sort of *exceptionality*, even though it belongs *generally* to all virtues.

Reply to objection 3: Even though beauty (*pulchritudo*) belongs to every virtue, it is nonetheless attributed to temperance in a most excellent way, and this for two reasons:

First, in accord with the common meaning of temperance, which involves a moderated and appropriate proportion which, as is clear from Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, the nature of beauty consists in.

Second, because the things from which temperance draws one back are the lowest things in a man, agreeing with him according to his bestial nature, as will be explained below (aa. 7 & 8, and q. 142, a. 4), and so it is by them that a man is prone to being disfigured most of all (*ex eis maxime natus est homo deturpari*). And it is as a result of this that *beauty* is attributed above all to temperance, which is what mainly removes a man's disfigurement. And it is for this same reason that *moral uprightness* is likewise attributed to temperance most of all. For in *Etymologia* Isidore says, "An individual is called upright because he has no disfigurement. For uprightness is attributed as a status of honor"—which is most of all thought of in the case of temperance, which, as will be explained below (q. 142, a. 4), repels the most shameful vices (*vitia opprobriosa*) most of all.

Article 3

Does temperance have to do only with sentient desires and pleasures?

It seems not to be the case that temperance has to do only with sentient desires and pleasures (*circa concupiscentias et delectationes*):

Objection 1: In *Rhetorica* Tully says, "Temperance is reason's firm and moderated dominance over lust and the other disordered impulses of the mind (*in libidinem atque in alios non rectos impetus animi*)." But *all* the passions (*passiones*) of the soul are called 'impulses of the mind' (*impetus animi*). It does not seem, therefore, that temperance has to do only with sentient desires and pleasures.

Objection 2: Virtue has to do with what is *difficult* and *good*. But it seems more difficult to temper fear—especially fear of the danger of death—than to moderate sentient desires and pleasures, which, as Augustine explains in *83 Quaestiones*, are disdained in the face of the pain and danger surrounding death. Therefore, it seems that the virtue of temperance is not mainly concerned with sentient desires and pleasures.

Objection 3: As Ambrose points out in *De Officiis* 1, temperance involves "the grace of moderating." And in *De Officiis* 1 Tully says that temperance involves "every instance of calming disturbances in the mind and of moderating things." But one must posit instances of moderating not only in the case of sentient desires and pleasures but also in exterior acts and in every sort of exterior thing. Therefore, it is not the case that temperance has to do only with sentient desires and pleasures.

But contrary to this: In *Etymologia* Isidore says, "Temperance is that by which lust and sentient desire is kept under control (*qua libido concupiscentiaque refrenatur*)."

I respond: As was explained above (q. 123, a. 12 and q. 136, a. 1), moral virtue involves preserving the good of reason against passions that resist reason. Now as was explained above when we were discussing the passions (*ST* 1-2, q. 23, a. 2), the movements of the passions of the soul are of two sorts, (a) one insofar as the sentient appetite *pursues* sensible and corporeal *goods*, and (b) the other insofar as the sentient appetite *shies away from* sensible and corporeal *evils*.

The first movement of the sentient appetite resists reason mainly through a lack of moderation (*praecipue per immoderantiam*). For sensible and corporeal goods, thought of in their own species, do not resist reason but instead serve it as instruments which reason uses to pursue its proper end. Instead, they resist reason mainly insofar as the sentient appetite tends toward them in a way that does not accord with reason. And so moral virtue properly involves *moderating passions* of this sort that imply the pursuit of the good.

By contrast, the movement of the sentient appetite that runs away from sensible evils resists reason not mainly because of a lack of moderation, but especially because of its own effect, viz., because by shying away from sensible and corporeal evils, which are sometimes connected with the good of reason, an individual departs as a result from the good of reason itself. And so moral virtue in such cases involves *standing firm* in the good of reason.

Therefore, just as the virtue of fortitude, whose nature it is to show *firmness*, has mainly to do with the passions that pertain to *shying away from* corporeal evils, viz., *fear*, and, after that, *audacity*, which attacks what is fearful in the hope of attaining some good, so, too, *temperance*, which implies a sort of *moderating*, has mainly to do with passions that *tend toward* sensible goods, viz., *sentient desires* and *pleasures*, and, after that, *sadness*, which occurs in the absence of such pleasures. For just as audacity presupposes something fearful, so, too, sadness of the sort in question arises from the absence of the aforementioned pleasures.

Reply to objection 1: As was explained above when we were discussing the passions (*ST* 1-2, q. 25, aa. 1-2), the passions that involve *shying away from evil* presuppose the passions that involve *pursuing the good*, and the passions of the irascible [part of the soul] presuppose the passions of the concupiscible [part]. And so when temperance directly moderates the passions of the concupiscible [part] that tend toward the good, it in turn modifies all the other passions insofar as the moderation of the latter passions follows upon the moderation of the former. For instance, if someone has a non-disordered sentient desire, then it follows that he will have hope in a moderate way and that he will be sad in a moderate way about the absence of the things desired.

Reply to objection 2: Sentient desire implies a sort of forcefulness in the appetite for what is pleasurable that stands in need of being kept under control, and this pertains to temperance. By contrast, fear implies the mind's shying away from certain evils, against which a man's mind needs firmness, which fortitude supplies. And so temperance properly has to do with sentient desires, and fortitude with fears.

Reply to objection 3: Exterior acts proceed from interior passions of the soul. And so an exterior act's being moderated depends on the interior passions' being moderated.

Article 4

Does temperance have to do only with the desires and pleasures associated with the sense of touch?

It seems not to be the case that temperance has to do only with the desires and pleasures associated with the sense of touch:

Objection 1: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says, "The role of temperance lies in controlling and quelling the excessive desires (*cupiditates*) by which we are drawn toward things that turn us away from God's laws and from the enjoyment of His goodness." And a little later he adds, "It is the function of temperance to disdain all corporeal allurements, along with popular praise." But it is not only excessive desires for the pleasures associated with touch that turn us away from God's laws, but also desires associated with the pleasures of the other senses, which are also counted among "corporeal

allurements," and, similarly, the excessive desire for wealth and even for worldly glory; this is why 1 Timothy 6:10 says, "Excessive desire [for wealth] is the root of all evil." Therefore, it is not the case that temperance has to do only with the desire for the pleasures associated with touch.

Objection 2: In *Ethics* 4 the Philosopher says, "He who is worthy in small things and dignifies himself by them is temperate, though not magnanimous." But large or small honors, which he is speaking of in that place, are pleasurable not to one's sense of touch but instead to his animal apprehension. Therefore, it is not the case that temperance has to do only with the desire for the pleasures associated with the sense of touch.

Objection 3: Things that belong to a single genus seem for that reason to belong to the subject matter of a [single] virtue. But all the pleasures of the senses seem to belong to a single genus. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, they belong to the subject matter of temperance.

Objection 4: As was established above when we were discussing the passions (*ST* 1-2, q. 31, a. 5), spiritual pleasures are greater than bodily pleasures. But sometimes certain individuals depart from God's law and from the state of virtue because of their desire for spiritual pleasures, e.g., because of their curiosity with respect to knowledge (*propter curiositatem scientiae*). Hence, in Genesis 23:5 the devil promises the first man knowledge by saying, "You will be like gods, knowing good and evil." Therefore, it is not the case that temperance has to do only with the pleasures associated with touch.

Objection 5: If the pleasures associated with touch were the proper subject matter of temperance, then it would have to be the case that temperance deals with *all* the pleasures of touch. But it does not deal with all of them; for instance, it does not deal with those that occur in games (*in ludis*). Therefore, the pleasures associated with the sense of touch are not the proper subject matter of temperance.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher says that temperance has properly to do with sentient desires and pleasures associated with the sense of touch.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 3), temperance has to do with instances of desire and pleasure in the way that fortitude has to do with instances of fear and daring. But fortitude has to do with instances of fear and daring in the case of the *greatest evils*, by which one's nature itself is extinguished, i.e., the dangers surrounding death. Hence, similarly, it must be the case that temperance has to do with desires for the *greatest pleasures*. And since pleasure follows upon a connatural operation, pleasures are stronger to the extent that they follow upon operations that are more natural.

Now the operations that are especially natural to animals are (a) those by which the nature of the *individual* is conserved through food and drink and (b) those by which the nature of the *species* is conserved through the union of male and female. And so temperance has to do properly with the pleasures of food and drink (*delectationes ciborum et potum*) and the pleasures of sex (*delectationes venereorum*). But pleasures of this sort follow upon the sense of touch. Hence, it follows that temperance has to do with the pleasures associated with the sense of touch.

Reply to objection 1: In this place Augustine seems to be taking temperance not insofar as it is a *specific* virtue that has a determinate subject matter, but rather insofar as it involves reason's moderating *any* sort of subject matter whatsoever—and this belongs [to temperance] as a *general* condition for virtue.

However, one could also reply that someone who is able to keep the greatest pleasures under control (*potest refrenare maximas delectationes*) is *a fortiori* able to keep lesser pleasures under control. And so temperance has to do *principally* and *properly* with desires for the pleasures associated with the sense of touch and *secondarily* with other sentient desires.

Reply to objection 2: In this place the Philosopher is using the name 'temperance' for the moderating of *exterior things*, i.e., so that an individual tends toward things that are commensurate with him—and he is not using the name for the moderating of *the affections of the soul*, which is what the *virtue* of temperance involves.

Reply to objection 3: The pleasures of the other senses behave differently in men and the other

animals. For in the other animals pleasure is caused by the other senses only in relation to things that can be sensed by touch; for instance, a lion is pleased upon seeing a stag, or hearing its call, for the sake of food. By contrast, a man takes pleasure in the other senses not only because of this, but also because of the *suitability* of sensible things.

And so insofar as the pleasures of the other senses are *referred to the pleasures of touch*, temperance has to do with as a consequence, though not principally.

By contrast, insofar as things that can be sensed by the other senses are pleasurable *because they are appealing* (*propter sui convenientiam*), as, for instance, when a man delights in a well-harmonized sound, that pleasure has nothing to do with the conservation of the nature. Hence, pleasures of that type do not have the right sort of importance for temperance to be predicated antonomastically with respect to them.

Reply to objection 4: Even though spiritual pleasures are by their nature greater than bodily pleasures, they nonetheless are not perceived in that way by the senses. As a result, they do not as strongly affect the sentient appetite, against whose force moral virtue conserves the good of reason.

An alternative reply is that spiritual pleasures are, taken in their own right, in accord with reason. Hence, they do not need to be kept under control—except incidentally, viz., insofar as one spiritual pleasure draws an individual away from another spiritual pleasure which is more important and more binding.

Reply to objection 5: Not all the pleasures of touch are relevant to the conservation of the nature. And so it so it is not necessary for temperance to deal with *all* the pleasures of touch.

Article 5

Does temperance have to do with the pleasures properly associated with the sense of taste?

It seems that temperance has to do with the pleasures properly associated with the sense of taste:

Objection 1: The pleasures of the sense of taste occur in the case of food and drink, which are more necessary for human life than are the pleasures of sex, which pertain to the sense of touch. But according to what was said above (a. 4), temperance has to do with pleasures associated with things that are necessary for human life. Therefore, temperance has more to do with the pleasures of taste than with the pleasures proper to touch.

Objection 2: Temperance has to do with the passions more than with the things themselves. But as *De Anima* 2 says, "Touch seems to be the sense that belongs to nourishment"—as regards the substance itself of the nourishment—"whereas flavor"—which is the proper object of the sense of taste—"is, as it were, the pleasure (*delectamentum*) that belongs to nourishment." Therefore, temperance has more to do with taste than with touch.

Objection 3: As *Ethics* 7 says, "*Temperance* and *intemperance*, *continence* and *incontinence*, and *perseverance* and *softness* have to do with the same things"—where softness involves delicacies. But delicacies seem to involve the pleasure found in flavors, which belong to the sense of taste. Therefore, temperance has to do with the pleasures proper to the sense of taste.

But contrary to this: The Philosopher says that temperance and intemperance "seem to make little or no use of the sense of taste."

I respond: As has been explained (a. 4), temperance has to do with the principal pleasures, which pertain most of all to the preservation of human life, either in the individual or in the species. Now in the case of these pleasures, there is something that is thought of as *primary* and something that is thought of as *secondary*.

What is *primary* is the *very act of making use of the thing that is necessary* (*ipse usus rei*

necessariae), e.g., (a) the female, who is necessary for the conservation of the species, or (b) food and drink, which are necessary for the preservation of the individual. And the very act of making use of these necessary things has a certain *essential pleasure* adjoined to it.

What is thought of as *secondary* in both sorts of use is *something that contributes to the use's being more pleasurable*, e.g., beauty and adornment in the case of the female, and delicious taste—and also smell—in the case of food.

And so temperance has principally to do with the pleasure of touch that follows *directly* from the very act of making use of the necessary things, *every* instance of which involves touching. On the other hand, temperance and intemperance have to do *secondarily* with the pleasures of either taste or smell or sight, insofar as the sensible objects of these senses contribute to the pleasurable use of the necessary things that involves the sense of touch.

Still, since taste is closer to touch than the other senses are, temperance has more to do with taste than with the other senses.

Reply to objection 1: Even the very act of making use of food, along with the pleasure that follows essentially upon it, pertains to touch. Hence, in *De Anima* 2 the Philosopher says, "Touch is a sense that belongs to food, since we receive nourishment from what is hot and what is cold, from what is moist and what is dry." But taste involves the discernment of flavors, which contribute to the delight of food, insofar as they are signs of agreeable nourishment.

Reply to objection 2: The pleasure of taste is, as it were, something added (*superveniens*), whereas the pleasure of touch follows in its own right (*per se*) from the act of making use of food and drink.

Reply to objection 3: Delicacies consist principally in the very substance of the food and secondarily in the exquisite flavor and preparation of the food.

Article 6

Should the rule associated with temperance be formulated in accord with the needs of the present life?

It seems that the rule associated with temperance should not be formulated in accord with the needs of the present life (*non sit sumenda secundum necessitatem praesentis vitae*):

Objection 1: What is higher is not regulated by what is lower. But since temperance is a virtue of the soul, it is higher than bodily needs (*superior quam necessitas corporalis*). Therefore, the rule associated with temperance should not be formulated in accord with bodily needs.

Objection 2: If anyone oversteps a rule, then he sins. Therefore, if bodily need were the rule associated with temperance, then if anyone indulged in pleasure beyond the needs of nature, which are satisfied by very little, then he would be sinning against temperance. But this seems wrong.

Objection 3: No one sins by observing the rule. Therefore, if bodily need were the rule associated with temperance, then if an individual were to indulge in a pleasure because of bodily need—e.g., for the sake of his health—then he would be immune from sin. But this seems to be false. Therefore, bodily need is not the rule associated with temperance.

But contrary to this: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says, "In both Testaments the temperate man has a firm rule regarding the things of this life, viz., that he should love nothing about them or think that they are to be desired in their own right. Instead, he should avail himself of these things—with the moderation of one making use of them and not with the affection of a lover—insofar as they satisfy the needs of this life and the needs associated with his responsibilities (*ad vitae huius atque officiorum necessitatem sat est usurpet*)."

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (q. 123, a. 12), the good of a moral virtue consists mainly in the order established by reason; for as Dionysius puts it in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, "The good of a man is to exist in accord with reason." Now the principal order of reason consists in one's ordering certain things toward their end, and it is in this ordering that the good of reason exists most of all. For the good has the nature of an end, and the end itself is a rule for those things that are ordered toward the end.

Now all the pleasurable things that come into a man's practical experience (*in usum hominis veniunt*) are ordered toward certain needs of this life as toward an end. And so temperance accepts the needs of this life as a rule that applies to the pleasurable things that it makes use of, with the result that it uses them only to the extent required by the needs of this life.

Reply to objection 1: As has been explained, the needs of this life have the nature of a rule insofar as they constitute an end. However, one must take into account that sometimes the *end of the one acting* (*finis operantis*) is different from the *end of the act* (*finis operis*). For instance, it is clear that the end of the *act of building* is the *house*, whereas the end of the *builder* is in some cases *profit*. So, then, the end and rule of temperance itself is beatitude, whereas the end and rule of what temperance makes use of are the needs of human life, under which falls whatever is useful for life.

Reply to objection 2: There are two possible ways to look at the needs of human life (*necessitas humanae vitae postest attendi dupliciter*): (a) insofar as what is said to be needed is something without which the thing in question *can in no way exist*, in the way that food is needed for animal life; and (b) insofar as what is said to be needed is something without which the thing in question *cannot exist in an appealing way* (*convenienter*). Now temperance pays attention not only to the first sense of what is needed, but also to the second sense. Hence, in *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher says, "The temperate individual desires pleasant things for the sake of health or for the sake of a robust bodily condition (*propter sanitatem vel propter bonam habitudinem*)."

On the other hand, things that are not needed can be of two kinds. Some are impediments to health or to a robust bodily condition; and the temperate individual does not in any way make use of them, since this would be a sin against temperance. By contrast, there are some that are not an impediment to health or to a robust bodily condition. And the temperate individual makes moderate use of these, depending on the place, the time, and appropriateness with respect to those with whom he lives. And this is why, in the same place, the Philosopher says that the temperate individual also desires other "pleasant things," which are not necessary for health or for a robust bodily condition but which "are not impediments to them."

Reply to objection 3: As has just been explained, temperance looks to what is needed in the sense of what is fitting for one's life. This has to do not only with fittingness as regards one's body, but also the fittingness of exterior things, e.g., riches and positions of responsibility and, much more, the fittingness of moral uprightness. This is why the Philosopher adds that in the case of the pleasant things which the temperate individual makes use of, he considers not only that they should not impede his health and the robust condition of his body, but also that they should not go "beyond the good," i.e., be contrary to moral uprightness, and that they should not go "beyond his substance," i.e., beyond the reach of his financial resources. Again, in *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine points out that the temperate individual looks not only "to the needs of life, but also to the needs associated with one's responsibilities."

Article 7

Is temperance a cardinal virtue?

It seems that temperance is not a cardinal virtue (*non sit virtus cardinalis*):

Objection 1: The good of a moral virtue depends on reason. But temperance has to do with what is

far distant from reason, viz., pleasures which, as *Ethics* 3 points out, are common to us and the non-rational animals. Therefore, temperance does not seem to be a principal virtue (*principalis virtus*).

Objection 2: The more forceful something is, the more difficult it is to keep it under control, or so it seems. But anger (*ira*), which mildness keeps under control (*quam refrenat mansuetudo*), is more forceful than sentient desire is; for Proverbs 27:4 says, "Anger has no mercy, nor does fury when it breaks out; and who can bear the force of an agitated spirit?" Therefore, *mildness* is a more important virtue (*principalior virtus*) than *temperance*.

Objection 3: As was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 25, a. 4), hope (*spes*) is a more important movement of the soul than is desire (*desiderium*), i.e., sentient desire (*concupiscentia*). But humility (*humilitas*) keeps the presumption of unmoderated hope under control. Therefore, *humility* seems to be a more important virtue than *temperance*, which keeps sentient desire under control.

But contrary to this: In *Moralia* 2 Gregory posits temperance among the principal virtues.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 123, a. 11 and *ST* 1-2, q. 61, aa. 3-4), a principal or cardinal virtue is one which is praised in a more principal way because of something which is *generally required for the nature of a virtue*.

Now *moderation*, which is required in *every* virtue, is especially praiseworthy in the case of the pleasures associated with touch, which temperance has to do with, both because (a) such pleasures are more natural to us, and so it is more difficult to abstain from them and to keep desires for them under control, and also because (b), as is clear from what has been said (aa. 4-5), the objects of those pleasures and desires are more necessary for the present life. And this is why temperance is posited as a principal, i.e., cardinal, virtue.

Reply to objection 1: An agent's power (*virtus*) is shown to be greater to the extent that it is able to extend its operation to things that are at a greater distance. And so a greater power on the part of reason is made manifest by the very fact that reason is able to moderate even desires and pleasures that are the most distant of all from it. Hence, this point contributes to the importance of temperance.

Reply to objection 2: The forcefulness of anger is caused by a certain accident, viz., a hurtful injury, and so the anger passes quickly, even though it has great forcefulness. By contrast, the forcefulness of a sentient desire proceeds from a natural cause and so it is longer-lasting and more common. And so it takes a more principal virtue to keep it under control.

Reply to objection 3: The objects of hope (*ea quorum est spes*) are higher than the objects of sentient desire, and for this reason hope is posited as a principal passion in the irascible part [of the soul].

By contrast, the objects of sentient desire and the pleasures of touch move the appetite more strongly, because they are more natural. And this is why temperance, which establishes the norm in these matters, is a principal virtue.

Article 8

Is temperance the greatest of the virtues?

It seems that temperance is the greatest of the virtues:

Objection 1: In *De Officiis* 1 Ambrose says, "What is seen and sought in temperance most of all is solicitude for what is morally upright (*honesti cura*) and regard for what is beautiful (*decoris consideratio*)." But a virtue is praiseworthy insofar as it is upright and beautiful. Therefore, temperance is the greatest of the virtues.

Objection 2: What belongs to a greater virtue is to do what is more difficult. But it is more difficult to keep sentient desires and the pleasures of touch under control than to rectify exterior actions—where the first of these belongs to temperance and the second to justice. Therefore, temperance

is a greater virtue than *justice*.

Objection 3: The more common something is, the more it seems to be necessary and better. But fortitude has to do with the dangers surrounding death, which occur more rarely than do the pleasures of touch, which occur every day; and so the exercise of temperance is more common than the exercise of fortitude. Therefore, temperance is a more noble virtue than *fortitude*.

But contrary to this: In *Rhetoric* 1 the Philosopher says, "The greatest virtues are those which are the most useful to others, and for this reason we honor brave individuals and just individuals most of all."

I respond: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 1, "The good of a multitude is more divine than the good of an individual." And so a virtue is better to the extent that it involves the good of a multitude. But justice and fortitude involve the good of a multitude more than temperance does. For justice consists in interactions, which have to do with others, and fortitude consists in the dangers associated with wars, which are endured for the common welfare, whereas temperance moderates only the desire for, and the pleasure associated with, those things that pertain to a man himself. Hence, it is clear that justice and fortitude are more excellent virtues than temperance is, and that prudence and the theological virtues are more important than justice and fortitude.

Reply to objection 1: Beauty and moral uprightness are attributed to temperance most of all, not because of the importance of its own proper goodness, but because of the shamefulness of the contrary evil, which it draws us away from insofar as it moderates pleasures that are common to both non-rational animals and us.

Reply to objection 2: Even though a virtue has to do with what is *good* and *difficult*, the *dignity* of the virtue has more to do with notion of the *good*, in which *justice* excels, than with the notion of the *difficult*, in which *temperance* excels.

Reply to objection 3: The commonality (*communitas*) by which something involves a multitude of men contributes more to the excellence of the goodness than does the sort of commonness (*communitas*) which is thought of insofar as something occurs frequently. Fortitude excels in the first of these, temperance in the second. Hence, fortitude is more important absolutely speaking, even though there is a respect in which temperance can be said to be more important than not only fortitude, but also justice.