

QUESTION 151

Chastity

Next we have to consider chastity (*castitas*): first, the virtue itself of chastity (question 151); second, virginity (*virginitas*), which is a part of chastity (question 152); and, third, lust (*luxuria*), which is the opposed vice (question 153).

Concerning chastity itself there are four questions: (1) Is chastity a virtue? (2) Is chastity a general virtue? (3) Is chastity distinct from abstinence? (4) How is chastity related to purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] (*pudicitia*)?

Article 1

Is chastity a virtue?

It seems that chastity is not a virtue:

Objection 1: We are talking now about a virtue of the soul. But chastity seems to belong to the body, since an individual is said to be chaste from the fact that he is related in a certain way to the use of certain parts of the body. Therefore, chastity is not a virtue.

Objection 2: As *Ethics 2* says, a virtue is “a voluntary habit.” But chastity does not seem to be something voluntary, since it seems to be taken away violently from women who are violently assaulted (*mulieribus violenter oppressis*). Therefore, it seems that chastity is not a virtue.

Objection 3: There are no virtues among non-believers. But some non-believers are chaste. Therefore, chastity is not a virtue.

Objection 4: The fruits [of the Holy Spirit] are distinct from the virtues. But as is clear from Galatians 5:23, chastity is numbered among the fruits. Therefore, chastity is not a virtue.

But contrary to this: In *De Decem Chordis* Augustine says, “Since you ought to excel your wife in virtue and since chastity is a virtue, you fall to the impulse of lust and want your wife to be victorious!”

I respond: The name ‘chastity’ (*castitas*) is taken from the fact that sentient desire—which, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics 3*, has to be kept under control like a child—is ‘chastised’ (*castigatur*) by reason. Now as is clear from what was said above (*ST 1-2*, q. 64, a. 1), the nature of a human virtue consists in something’s being modified in accord with reason. Hence, it is clear that chastity is a virtue.

Reply to objection 1: Chastity is seated in the soul as in a subject, but it has its subject matter in the body. For chastity involves an individual’s using his bodily members in moderation according to the judgment of reason and the choice of the will.

Reply to objection 2: As Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei 1*, “As long as she remains firm in the intention by which even her body deserves to be sanctified, the violence of someone else’s lust does not remove from her very body the sanctity which the perseverance of her continence preserves.” And in the same place he adds, “There is a power (*virtus*) in her mind which has fortitude as its companion and by which she chooses to tolerate any evils rather than to consent to a bad man.”

Reply to objection 3: In *Contra Iulianum* Augustine says, “It is far from true that there is genuine virtue in someone if he is not just, and it is far from true that he is genuinely just if he does not live by faith.” And so he concludes that in non-believers there is no genuine chastity or any other virtue, since [the habits in question] are not referred to the appropriate end. And as he adds in the same place, “The virtues are distinguished from the vices not by their functions,”—i.e., by their acts— “but by their ends.”

Reply to objection 4: Chastity has the nature of a *virtue* insofar as it operates in accord with reason, whereas it is numbered among the *fruits* insofar as it has delight in its act.

Article 2

Is chastity a general virtue?

It seems that chastity is a general virtue (*virtus generalis*):

Objection 1: In *De Mendacio* Augustine says, “Chastity of the mind is an ordered movement of the mind, not subordinating greater things to lesser things.” But this belongs to *every* virtue. Therefore, chastity is a general virtue.

Objection 2: The name ‘chastity’ (*castitas*) is taken from ‘chastisement’ (*castigatio*). But every movement of the appetitive part [of the soul] should be ‘chastised’ by reason. Therefore, since every moral virtue is such that some appetitive movement is kept under control by it, it seems that *every* moral virtue is chastity.

Objection 3: Fornication is opposed to chastity. But fornication seems to belong to *every* genus of sin, since Psalm 72:27 says, “Lost are all those who fornicate themselves away from you.” Therefore, chastity is a general virtue.

But contrary to this: Macrobius posits chastity as a part of temperance.

I respond: The name ‘chastity’ is understood in two ways:

In one sense, the name ‘chastity’ is taken *properly*, and in this sense chastity is a certain *specific* virtue that has a specific subject matter, viz., sentient desires for the pleasurable things associated with sex (*concupiscentias delectabilium quae sunt in venereis*).

In a second sense, the name ‘chastity’ is taken *metaphorically*. For just as sexual pleasure—which chastity and its opposed vice, lust, have to do with—consists in the intermingling of bodies (*in corporis commixtione*), so, too, there is a certain pleasure—which a sort of spiritual chastity, metaphorically speaking, or likewise a sort of spiritual fornication, again metaphorically speaking, has to do with—that consists in a spiritual joining of the mind with certain things. For if a man’s mind delights in a spiritual joining with what it ought to be joined to, viz., God, and abstains from being pleurably joined to other things in a way that is contrary to the demands of the divine order, then this will be called ‘spiritual chastity’—this according to 2 Corinthians 11:2 (“I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a chaste virgin to her one husband”). By contrast, if the mind is joined pleurably to any other things in a way contrary to the demands of the divine order, then this will be called ‘spiritual fornication’—this according to Jeremiah 3:1 (“You have committed fornication with many lovers”). And if we understand chastity in this way, then chastity is a *general* virtue, since *every* virtue is such that it draws the human mind back from being pleurably joined to illicit things. Still, the *nature* of this sort of chastity consists in charity and the other theological virtues, by which the mind is joined to God.

Reply to objection 1: This argument goes through for the case of chastity taken metaphorically.

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above (q. 142, a. 2), sentient desire for what is pleasurable is especially assimilated to a boy, because the appetite for what is pleasurable is connatural to us—and especially the desire for the pleasures associated with touch, which are ordered toward the conservation of the nature. And so it is that if the desire for such pleasures is nourished by being consented to, it grows very strong, like a boy who is left to his own will. And so the sentient desire for these pleasures especially needs to be chastised. And that is why ‘chastity’ is predicated antonomastically with respect to sentient desires of this sort, just as ‘fortitude is predicated antonomastically with respect to matters in which we especially need firmness of mind.

Reply to objection 3: This objection goes through for the case of *spiritual* fornication, speaking metaphorically, which, as has been explained, is opposed to *spiritual* chastity.

Article 3

Is chastity a virtue distinct from abstinence?

It seems that chastity is not a virtue distinct from abstinence:

Objection 1: A single virtue is sufficient for a subject matter of a single genus. But everything that pertains to a single sensory power seems to belong to a single genus. Therefore, since the pleasure of food, which abstinence has to do with, and sexual pleasure, which chastity has to do with, both belong to the sense of touch, it seems that chastity is not a virtue different from abstinence.

Objection 2: In *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher assimilates all the vices belonging to intemperance to childish sins that stand in need of chastisement. But chastity takes its name (*castitas*) from the chastisement (*castigatio*) of the opposed vices. Therefore, since certain of the vices belonging to intemperance are hindered by abstinence, it seems that abstinence is [the same as] chastity.

Objection 3: The pleasures associated with the other senses pertain to temperance insofar as they are ordered toward the pleasures associated with the sense of touch, which temperance has to do with. But the pleasures of food, which abstinence has to do with, are ordered toward the pleasures of sex, which chastity has to do with. This is why Jerome says, “The belly and the genitalia lie close to one another, in order that the complicity of the vices might be understood from the closeness of the members.” Therefore, abstinence and chastity are not virtues distinct from one another.

But contrary to this: In 2 Corinthians 6:5-6 the Apostle numbers chastity on the same level with fasts, which belong to abstinence (*connumerat castitatem ieiuniorum, quae ad abstinentiam pertinent*).

I respond: As has been explained (q. 141, a. 4), temperance has properly to do with sentient desires for the pleasures of touch. And so where there are diverse types of pleasure, there are diverse virtues included under temperance.

Now as *Ethics* 10 explains, pleasures are proportioned to the operations of which the pleasures are the fulfillment. But it is clear that the operations involving the use of food, by which the nature of the individual is preserved, belong to a different species from the operations involving the use of the sexual organs, by which the nature of the species is preserved. And so chastity, which has to do with sexual pleasure, is a virtue distinct from abstinence, which has to do with the pleasures of food.

Reply to objection 1: As is explained in *Ethics* 3, temperance has to do principally with the pleasures of touch not as regards *the judgment* of the sensory power about things that can be touched, but as regards *the very use* of things that can be touched. But the manner of making use of food and drink is different from the way of making use of the sexual organs. And so there have to be diverse virtues, even though they have to do with a single sensory power.

Reply to objection 2: Sexual pleasures are stronger than the pleasures of food, and they suppress reason to a greater degree. For this reason, they are more in need of being chastised and kept under control. For if an individual consents to them, the force of his sentient desire thereby increases and his mental power declines. Hence, in *Sililoquium* 1 Augustine says, “I think that nothing casts a man’s mind down from its heights more than a woman’s blandishments, along with the contact between bodies that is necessary for one’s having a wife (*corporumque ille contactus sine quo uxor haberi non potest*).”

Reply to objection 3: The pleasures of the other senses pertain to conserving man’s nature only insofar as they are ordered toward the pleasures of touch, and so temperance does not include any other virtue having to do with the pleasures of the other senses.

However, even though the pleasures of food are in some sense ordered toward sexual pleasure, they are nonetheless ordered in their own right toward conserving a man’s life. And so the pleasures of food have a specific virtue in their own right, even if that virtue, which is called abstinence, orders its own act toward the end that belongs to chastity.

Article 4

Does purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] belong specifically to chastity?

It seems that purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] (*pudicitia*) does not belong specifically to chastity:

Objection 1: In *De Civitate Dei* 1 Augustine says, “Purity is a certain virtue of the soul.” Therefore, it is not something that pertains to chastity, but is instead in its own right (*per seipsam*) a virtue distinct from chastity.

Objection 2: *Pudicitia* [purity or modesty] comes from *pudor*, which seems to be the same as *verecundia* [shame]. But, according to Damascene, shame (*verecundia*) has to do with an unseemly act (*est de turpi actu*), and this belongs to every sinful act. Therefore, purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] does not belong to chastity more than to the other virtues.

Objection 3: In *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher says that every sort of intemperance is in general especially worthy of reproach. But it seems that purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] involves fleeing from what is worthy of reproach. Therefore, purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] belongs to all the parts of temperance and not specifically to chastity.

But contrary to this: In *De Perseverantia* Augustine says, “Purity should be preached, in order that nothing illicit be perpetrated with the genital members by him who has ears to hear.” But the use of the genital members properly pertains to chastity. Therefore, purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] properly belongs to chastity.

I respond: As has been explained (obj. 2), the name *pudicitia* [purity or modesty] is taken from the name *pudor*, which signifies shame (*verecundia*). And so it must be the case that purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] has to do with those things that men are most ashamed of. But as Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei* 14, men are most ashamed of sexual acts, to the extent that even the conjugal union, which is adorned with the uprightness of marriage, is not lacking in shame. This is because the movements of the genital members are not subject to the command of reason in the way that the movements of the other exterior members [of the body] are.

Now as the Philosopher points out in *Rhetoric* 2, a man is ashamed not only of sexual intercourse (*de illa mixtione venerea*), but also of certain signs of it. And so purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] has to do properly with sexual matters, and especially with these sexual signs, e.g., shameful looks, kisses, and touches. And since these signs are more often perceived, purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] looks more to exterior signs of this sort, whereas chastity has to do with sexual intercourse.

And so purity [or modesty in the sense of purity] is ordered toward chastity, not as a virtue distinct from chastity but in the sense that it expresses a certain circumstance of chastity. However, sometimes ‘purity’ [or ‘modesty’] is used in place of ‘chastity’.

Reply to objection 1: In this passage Augustine is using ‘purity’ in place of ‘chastity’.

Reply to objection 2: All vices have a certain unseemliness, but as is clear from what was said above (q. 142, a. 4), the vices that belong to intemperance have unseemliness in a special way.

Reply to objection 3: Among the vices that belong to intemperance it is sexual sins that are especially unseemly, both because (a) of the disobedience of the genital members and also because (b) reason is engrossed most of all by sins of this sort.