

QUESTION 160

Modesty

Next we have to consider modesty (*modestia*): first, modesty itself in general (question 160) and, second, each of the things that is contained under it (questions 161-169).

On the first topic there are two questions: (1) Is modesty a part of temperance? (2) What is the subject matter of modesty?

Article 1

Is modesty a part of temperance?

It seems that modesty is not a part of temperance:

Objection 1: ‘Modesty’ (*modestia*) is taken from ‘mode’ (*modus*). But mode is required in *every* virtue, since virtue is ordered toward the good and, as Augustine says in *De Natura Boni*, the good consists in “mode, species, and order.” Therefore, modesty is a *general* virtue. Therefore, modesty should not be posited as a part of temperance.

Objection 2: The praiseworthiness of temperance seems to consist in a certain sort of moderation. But the name ‘modesty’ is taken from this. Therefore, modesty is the same thing as temperance and not a part of it.

Objection 3: Modesty seems to have to do with correcting one’s neighbors—this according to 2 Timothy 24-25 (“A servant of the Lord should not argue, but should instead be gentle with everyone, reproving with modesty those who resist the truth”). But as was established above (q. 33, a. 1), correcting a wrong-doer is an act of justice or of charity. Therefore, it seems that modesty is a part of justice rather than a part of temperance.

But contrary to this: Tully posits modesty as a part of temperance.

I respond: As was explained above (q. 141, a. 4 and q. 157, a. 3), temperance applies moderation in the case of things in which it is very difficult to be moderate, viz., sentient desires for the pleasures of touch. Now whenever there is a virtue that specifically concerns some very great matter (*circa aliquod maximum*), there has to be another virtue that concerns things that are more ordinary (*quae mediocriter se habent*), because a man’s life has to be regulated by the virtues with respect to *everything*. For instance, it was explained above that [the virtue of] *magnificence* has to do with large sums of money, and, in addition to magnificence, there has to be [a virtue of] *generosity*, which deals with smaller sums. Hence, it is necessary for there to be some virtue that brings moderation to other smaller matters in which it is not as difficult to be moderate. And this virtue is called *modesty*, and it is joined to temperance as to its principal virtue.

Reply to objection 1: A common name is sometimes appropriated for things that are the lowest, in the way that the common name *angel* is sometimes appropriated for the lowest order of angels. So, too, *mode*, which is commonly preserved in every virtue, is appropriated in a special way for the virtue which posits the mode in the smallest matters.

Reply to objection 2: Some things require tempering because of their strength, in the way that strong wine is tempered, whereas moderation is required in *all* things. And so temperance has more to do with strong passions, whereas moderation has to do with ordinary passions.

Reply to objection 3: ‘Modesty’ is here being taken from ‘mode’ understood in the general sense, insofar as it is required in all virtues.

Article 2

Does modesty have to do only with exterior actions?

It seems that modesty has to do only with exterior actions:

Objection 1: The interior movements of our passions cannot be known to others. But in Philippians 4:45 the Apostle mandates that our “modesty be known to all men.” Therefore, modesty has to do with exterior actions alone.

Objection 2: Virtues that have to do with the passions are distinct from the virtue of justice, which has to do with operations. But modesty seems to be a single virtue. Therefore, if it has to do with exterior operations, then it will not have to do with interior passions.

Objection 3: No virtue, while remaining one and the same virtue, has to do with [all of the following]: (a) *appetite*, which is proper to the moral virtues, and (b) what pertains to *cognition*, which belongs properly to the intellectual virtues, and (c) what belongs to the *irascible and concupiscible powers*. Therefore, if modesty is a single virtue, then it cannot have to do with all the things just mentioned.

But contrary to this: In all the things just mentioned a *mode* has to be preserved, and it is from this mode that the name ‘modesty’ is taken. Therefore, modesty has to do with all the things just mentioned.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), modesty differs from temperance in the fact that temperance moderates things that are very difficult to hold back, whereas modesty moderates things that are more ordinary in this regard.

Now certain authors seem to have talked about modesty in different ways. For whenever they were considering some special type of good or some special type of difficulty in moderating, they subtracted it from modesty and left modesty for lesser things. Now it was obvious to everyone that refraining from the pleasures of touch involves a special type of difficulty. Hence, they all distinguished *temperance* from *modesty*. But beyond this, Tully thought that there was a special good involved in moderating punishments, and so he also subtracted *clemency* from modesty and posited modesty for everything left over that had to be moderated.

Now it seems that there were four things left over. One of them is the *movement of the mind toward excellence*, which *humility* moderates. The second is *the desire for the things pertaining to cognition*, and this is moderated by *studiousness (studiositas)*, which is opposed to *curiosity (curiositas)*. The third involves bodily movements and actions, viz., *that they be done decently and in an upright way (decenter et honeste fiant)*—both those that are done in earnest (*serio aguntur*) and those that are done in play (*ludo aguntur*). And the fourth has to do with *outward apparel*, e.g., in clothing and things of that sort.

However, as regards some of these, other authors posited certain special virtues. For instance, Andronicus posited *gentleness, simplicity, humility*, and others of this sort that have been discussed above (q. 143). Again, Aristotle posited *eutrapelia* with respect to play. All of them are contained under modesty as it is understood by Tully. And on this understanding modesty has to do not only with exterior actions but also with interior actions.

Reply to objection 1: The Apostle is talking about modesty insofar as it has to do with exterior acts. And yet it is also the case that the moderation of interior movements can be manifested by certain exterior signs.

Reply to objection 2: Diverse virtues, which are assigned by diverse authors, are contained under modesty. Hence, nothing prevents modesty from having to do with things that require diverse virtues. And yet there is not as great a diversity among the parts of modesty from one another as there is in the difference between justice, which has to do with operations, and temperance, which has to do with

passions. For in actions and passions in which there is not a high degree of difficulty on the part of the subject matter, but only on the part of the moderating, there is just one virtue to pay attention to, viz., the one that has to do with some type of moderating.

Reply to objection 3: The reply to the third objection is clear from what has just been said.