

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

[Index](#) [[<<](#) [⬮](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

TEMPERANCE (Questions [141]-143)

OF TEMPERANCE (EIGHT ARTICLES)

In the next place we must consider temperance: (1) Temperance itself; (2) its parts; (3) its precepts. With regard to temperance we must consider (1) temperance itself; (2) the contrary vices.

Under the first head there are eight points of inquiry:

- [\(1\)](#) Whether temperance is a virtue?
 - [\(2\)](#) Whether it is a special virtue?
 - [\(3\)](#) Whether it is only about desires and pleasures?
 - [\(4\)](#) Whether it is only about pleasures of touch?
 - [\(5\)](#) Whether it is about pleasures of taste, as such, or only as a kind of touch?
 - [\(6\)](#) What is the rule of temperance?
 - [\(7\)](#) Whether it is a cardinal, or principal, virtue?
 - [\(8\)](#) Whether it is the greatest of virtues ?
-

[Index](#) [[<<](#) [⬮](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Article: 1](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether temperance is a virtue?

Objection 1: It seems that temperance is not a virtue. For no virtue goes against the inclination of nature, since "there is in us a natural aptitude for virtue," as stated in Ethic. ii, 1. Now temperance withdraws us from pleasures to which nature inclines, according to Ethic. ii, 3,8. Therefore temperance is not a virtue.

Objection 2: Further, virtues are connected with one another, as stated above ([FS, Question \[65\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). But some people have temperance without having the other virtues: for we find many who are temperate, and yet covetous or timid. Therefore temperance is not a virtue.

Objection 3: Further, to every virtue there is a corresponding gift, as appears from what we have said above ([FS, Question \[68\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)). But seemingly no gift corresponds to temperance, since all the gifts have been already ascribed to the other virtues ([Questions \[8\]](#), 9, 19, 45, 52, 71, 139). Therefore temperance is not a virtue.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Music. vi, 15): "Temperance is the name of a virtue."

I answer that, As stated above ([FS, Question \[55\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), it is essential to virtue to incline man to good. Now the good of man is to be in accordance with reason, as Dionysius states (Div. Nom. iv). Hence human virtue is that which inclines man to something in accordance with reason. Now temperance evidently inclines man to this, since its very name implies moderation or temperateness, which reason causes. Therefore temperance is a virtue.

Reply to Objection 1: Nature inclines everything to whatever is becoming to it. Wherefore man naturally desires pleasures that are becoming to him. Since, however, man as such is a rational being, it follows that those pleasures are becoming to man which are in accordance with reason. From such pleasures temperance does not withdraw him, but from those which are contrary to reason. Wherefore it is clear that temperance is not contrary to the inclination of human nature, but is in accord with it. It is, however, contrary to the inclination of the animal nature that is not subject to reason.

Reply to Objection 2: The temperance which fulfils the conditions of perfect virtue is not without prudence, while this is lacking to all who are in sin. Hence those who lack other virtues, through being subject to the opposite vices, have not the temperance which is a virtue, though they do acts of temperance from a certain natural disposition, in so far as certain imperfect virtues are either natural to man, as stated above ([FS, Question \[63\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), or acquired by habituation, which virtues, through lack of prudence, are not perfected by reason, as stated above ([FS, Question \[65\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)).

Reply to Objection 3: Temperance also has a corresponding gift, namely, fear, whereby man is withheld from the pleasures of the flesh, according to Ps. 118:120: "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear." The gift of fear has for its principal object God, Whom it avoids offending, and in this respect it corresponds to the virtue of hope, as stated above ([Question \[19\]](#), [Article \[9\]](#), ad 1). But it may have for its secondary object whatever a man shuns in order to avoid offending God. Now man stands in the greatest need of the fear of God in order to shun those things which are most seductive, and these are the matter of temperance: wherefore the gift of fear corresponds to temperance also.

Whether temperance is a special virtue?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is not a special virtue. For Augustine says (De Morib. Eccl. xv) that "it belongs to temperance to preserve one's integrity and freedom from corruption for God's sake." But this is common to every virtue. Therefore temperance is not a special virtue.

Objection 2: Further, Ambrose says (De Offic. i, 42) that "what we observe and seek most in temperance is tranquillity of soul." But this is common to every virtue. Therefore temperance is not a special virtue.

Objection 3: Further, Tully says (De Offic. i, 27) that "we cannot separate the beautiful from the virtuous," and that "whatever is just is beautiful." Now the beautiful is considered as proper to temperance, according to the same authority (Tully, De Offic. i, 27). Therefore temperance is not a special virtue.

On the contrary, The Philosopher (Ethic. ii, 7; iii, 10) reckons it a special virtue.

I answer that, It is customary in human speech to employ a common term in a restricted sense in order to designate the principal things to which that common term is applicable: thus the word "city" is used antonomastically* to designate Rome. [*Antonomasia is the figure of speech whereby we substitute the general for the individual term; e.g. The Philosopher for Aristotle]. Accordingly the word "temperance" has a twofold acceptance. First, in accordance with its common signification: and thus temperance is not a special but a general virtue, because the word "temperance" signifies a certain temperateness or moderation, which reason appoints to human operations and passions: and this is common to every moral virtue. Yet there is a logical difference between temperance and fortitude, even if we take them both as general virtues: since temperance withdraws man from things which seduce the appetite from obeying reason, while fortitude incites him to endure or withstand those things on account of which he forsakes the good of reason.

On the other hand, if we take temperance antonomastically, as withholding the appetite from those things which are most seductive to man, it is a special virtue, for thus it has, like fortitude, a special matter.

Reply to Objection 1: Man's appetite is corrupted chiefly by those things which seduce him into forsaking the rule of reason and Divine law. Wherefore integrity, which Augustine ascribes to temperance, can, like the latter, be taken in two ways: first, in a general sense, and secondly in a sense of excellence.

Reply to Objection 2: The things about which temperance is concerned have a most disturbing effect on the soul, for the reason that they are natural to man, as we shall state further on ([Articles \[4\],5](#)). Hence tranquillity of soul is ascribed to temperance by way of excellence, although it is a common property of all the virtues.

Reply to Objection 3: Although beauty is becoming to every virtue, it is ascribed to temperance, by way of excellence, for two reasons. First, in respect of the generic notion of

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS141.html](#)le understand by beauty, as attested by Dionysius (Div. Nom. iv). Secondly, because the things from which temperance withholds us, hold the lowest place in man, and are becoming to him by reason of his animal nature, as we shall state further on ([Articles \[4\]](#),5; [Question \[142\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)), wherefore it is natural that such things should defile him. In consequence beauty is a foremost attribute of temperance which above all hinders man from being defiled. In like manner honesty [*Honesty must be taken here in its broad sense as synonymous with moral goodness, from the point of view of decorum] is a special attribute of temperance: for Isidore says (Etym. x): "An honest man is one who has no defilement, for honesty means an honorable state." This is most applicable to temperance, which withstands the vices that bring most dishonor on man, as we shall state further on ([Question \[142\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)).

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Article: 3](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether temperance is only about desires and pleasures?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is not only about desires and pleasures. For Tully says (De Invent. Rhet. ii, 54) that "temperance is reason's firm and moderate mastery of lust and other wanton emotions of the mind." Now all the passions of the soul are called emotions of the mind. Therefore it seems that temperance is not only about desires and pleasures.

Objection 2: Further, "Virtue is about the difficult and the good" [*Ethic. ii, 3]. Now it seems more difficult to temper fear, especially with regard to dangers of death, than to moderate desires and pleasures, which are despised on account of deadly pains and dangers, according to Augustine ([Questions \[83\]](#), qu. 36). Therefore it seems that the virtue of temperance is not chiefly about desires and pleasures.

Objection 3: Further, according to Ambrose (De Offic. i, 43) "the grace of moderation belongs to temperance": and Tully says (De Offic. ii, 27) that "it is the concern of temperance to calm all disturbances of the mind and to enforce moderation." Now moderation is needed, not only in desires and pleasures, but also in external acts and whatever pertains to the exterior. Therefore temperance is not only about desires and pleasures.

On the contrary, Isidore says (Etym.) [*The words quoted do not occur in the work referred to; Cf. his De Summo Bono xxxvii, xlii, and De Different. ii, 39]: that "it is temperance whereby lust and desire are kept under control."

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[123\]](#), [Article \[12\]](#); [Question \[136\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), it belongs to moral virtue to safeguard the good of reason against the passions that rebel against reason. Now the movement of the soul's passions is twofold, as stated above ([FS](#), [Question \[23\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), when we were treating of the passions: the one, whereby the sensitive appetite pursues sensible and bodily goods, the other whereby it flies from sensible and bodily evils.

The first of these movements of the sensitive appetite rebels against reason chiefly by lack of moderation. Because sensible and bodily goods, considered in their species, are not in

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS141.html](#)
attain its proper end: and that they are opposed to reason is owing to the fact that the sensitive appetite fails to tend towards them in accord with the mode of reason. Hence it belongs properly to moral virtue to moderate those passions which denote a pursuit of the good.

On the other hand, the movement of the sensitive appetite in flying from sensible evil is mostly in opposition to reason, not through being immoderate, but chiefly in respect of its flight: because, when a man flies from sensible and bodily evils, which sometimes accompany the good of reason, the result is that he flies from the good of reason. Hence it belongs to moral virtue to make man while flying from evil to remain firm in the good of reason.

Accordingly, just as the virtue of fortitude, which by its very nature bestows firmness, is chiefly concerned with the passion, viz. fear, which regards flight from bodily evils, and consequently with daring, which attacks the objects of fear in the hope of attaining some good, so, too, temperance, which denotes a kind of moderation, is chiefly concerned with those passions that tend towards sensible goods, viz. desire and pleasure, and consequently with the sorrows that arise from the absence of those pleasures. For just as daring presupposes objects of fear, so too such like sorrow arises from the absence of the aforesaid pleasures.

Reply to Objection 1: As stated above ([FS, Question \[23\]](#), [Articles \[1\],2](#); [FS, Question \[25\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)), when we were treating of the passions, those passions which pertain to avoidance of evil, presuppose the passions pertaining to the pursuit of good; and the passions of the irascible presuppose the passions of the concupiscible. Hence, while temperance directly moderates the passions of the concupiscible which tend towards good, as a consequence, it moderates all the other passions, inasmuch as moderation of the passions that precede results in moderation of the passions that follow: since he that is not immoderate in desire is moderate in hope, and grieves moderately for the absence of the things he desires.

Reply to Objection 2: Desire denotes an impulse of the appetite towards the object of pleasure and this impulse needs control, which belongs to temperance. on the other hand fear denotes a withdrawal of the mind from certain evils, against which man needs firmness of mind, which fortitude bestows. Hence temperance is properly about desires, and fortitude about fears.

Reply to Objection 3: External acts proceed from the internal passions of the soul: wherefore their moderation depends on the moderation of the internal passions.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 4 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether temperance is only about desires and pleasures of touch?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is not only about desires and pleasures of touch. For Augustine says (De Morib. Eccl. xix) that "the function of temperance is to control and quell the desires which draw us to the things which withdraw us from the laws of God and from the fruit of His goodness"; and a little further on he adds that "it is the duty of temperance to spurn

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS141.html](#)y
by the desire for pleasures of touch, but also by the desire for pleasures of the other senses, for these, too, belong to the bodily allurements, and again by the desire for riches or for worldly glory: wherefore it is written ([1 Tim. 6:10](#)). "Desire [*Cupiditas,' which is the Douay version following the Greek {philargyria} renders 'desire of money'] is the root of all evils." Therefore temperance is not only about desires of pleasures of touch.

Objection 2: Further, the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 3) that "one who is worthy of small things and deems himself worthy of them is temperate, but he is not magnificent." Now honors, whether small or great, of which he is speaking there, are an object of pleasure, not of touch, but in the soul's apprehension. Therefore temperance is not only about desires for pleasures of touch.

Objection 3: Further, things that are of the same genus would seem to pertain to the matter of a particular virtue under one same aspect. Now all pleasures of sense are apparently of the same genus. Therefore they all equally belong to the matter of temperance.

Objection 4: Further, spiritual pleasures are greater than the pleasures of the body, as stated above ([FS, Question \[31\]](#), [Article \[5\]](#)) in the treatise on the passions. Now sometimes men forsake God's laws and the state of virtue through desire for spiritual pleasures, for instance, through curiosity in matters of knowledge: wherefore the devil promised man knowledge, saying ([Gn. 3:5](#)): "Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." Therefore temperance is not only about pleasures of touch.

Objection 5: Further, if pleasures of touch were the proper matter of temperance, it would follow that temperance is about all pleasures of touch. But it is not about all, for instance, about those which occur in games. Therefore pleasures of touch are not the proper matter of temperance.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 10) that "temperance is properly about desires of pleasures of touch."

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[3\]](#)), temperance is about desires and pleasures in the same way as fortitude is about fear and daring. Now fortitude is about fear and daring with respect to the greatest evils whereby nature itself is dissolved; and such are dangers of death. Wherefore in like manner temperance must needs be about desires for the greatest pleasures. And since pleasure results from a natural operation, it is so much the greater according as it results from a more natural operation. Now to animals the most natural operations are those which preserve the nature of the individual by means of meat and drink, and the nature of the species by the union of the sexes. Hence temperance is properly about pleasures of meat and drink and sexual pleasures. Now these pleasures result from the sense of touch. Wherefore it follows that temperance is about pleasures of touch.

Reply to Objection 1: In the passage quoted Augustine apparently takes temperance, not as a special virtue having a determinate matter, but as concerned with the moderation of reason, in any matter whatever: and this is a general condition of every virtue. However, we may also reply that if a man can control the greatest pleasures, much more can he control lesser ones. Wherefore it belongs chiefly and properly to temperance to moderate desires and pleasures of touch, and secondarily other pleasures.

Reply to Objection 2: The Philosopher takes temperance as denoting moderation in external things, when, to wit, a man tends to that which is proportionate to him, but not as denoting

Reply to Objection 3: The pleasures of the other senses play a different part in man and in other animals. For in other animals pleasures do not result from the other senses save in relation to sensibles of touch: thus the lion is pleased to see the stag, or to hear its voice, in relation to his food. On the other hand man derives pleasure from the other senses, not only for this reason, but also on account of the becomingness of the sensible object. Wherefore temperance is about the pleasures of the other senses, in relation to pleasures of touch, not principally but consequently: while in so far as the sensible objects of the other senses are pleasant on account of their becomingness, as when a man is pleased at a well-harmonized sound, this pleasure has nothing to do with the preservation of nature. Hence these passions are not of such importance that temperance can be referred to them antonomastically.

Reply to Objection 4: Although spiritual pleasures are by their nature greater than bodily pleasures, they are not so perceptible to the senses, and consequently they do not so strongly affect the sensitive appetite, against whose impulse the good of reason is safeguarded by moral virtue. We may also reply that spiritual pleasures, strictly speaking, are in accordance with reason, wherefore they need no control, save accidentally, in so far as one spiritual pleasure is a hindrance to another greater and more binding.

Reply to Objection 5: Not all pleasures of touch regard the preservation of nature, and consequently it does not follow that temperance is about all pleasures of touch.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 5 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether temperance is about the pleasures proper to the taste?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is about pleasures proper to the taste. For pleasures of the taste result from food and drink, which are more necessary to man's life than sexual pleasures, which regard the touch. But according to what has been said ([Article \[4\]](#)), temperance is about pleasures in things that are necessary to human life. Therefore temperance is about pleasures proper to the taste rather than about those proper to the touch.

Objection 2: Further, temperance is about the passions rather than about things themselves. Now, according to De Anima ii, 3, "the touch is the sense of food," as regards the very substance of the food, whereas "savor" which is the proper object of the taste, is "the pleasing quality of the food." Therefore temperance is about the taste rather than about the touch.

Objection 3: Further, according to Ethic. vii, 4,7: "temperance and intemperance are about the same things, and so are continence and incontinence, perseverance, and effeminacy," to which delicacy pertains. Now delicacy seems to regard the delight taken in savors which are the object of the taste. Therefore temperance is about pleasures proper to the taste.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 10) that "seemingly temperance and intemperance have little if anything to do with the taste."

[Donate bitcoin.](#) St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS141.html](#) which chiefly regard the preservation of human life either in the species or in the individual. In these matters certain things are to be considered as principal and others as secondary. The principal thing is the use itself of the necessary means, of the woman who is necessary for the preservation of the species, or of food and drink which are necessary for the preservation of the individual: while the very use of these necessary things has a certain essential pleasure annexed thereto.

In regard to either use we consider as secondary whatever makes the use more pleasurable, such as beauty and adornment in woman, and a pleasing savor and likewise odor in food. Hence temperance is chiefly about the pleasure of touch, that results essentially from the use of these necessary things, which use is in all cases attained by the touch. Secondarily, however, temperance and intemperance are about pleasures of the taste, smell, or sight, inasmuch as the sensible objects of these senses conduce to the pleasurable use of the necessary things that have relation to the touch. But since the taste is more akin to the touch than the other senses are, it follows that temperance is more about the taste than about the other senses.

Reply to Objection 1: The use of food and the pleasure that essentially results therefrom pertain to the touch. Hence the Philosopher says (De Anima ii, 3) that "touch is the sense of food, for food is hot or cold, wet or dry." To the taste belongs the discernment of savors, which make the food pleasant to eat, in so far as they are signs of its being suitable for nourishment.

Reply to Objection 2: The pleasure resulting from savor is additional, so to speak, whereas the pleasure of touch results essentially from the use of food and drink.

Reply to Objection 3: Delicacy regards principally the substance of the food, but secondarily it regards its delicious savor and the way in which it is served.

[Index](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Second Part of the Second Part](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

[Question: 141](#) [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Article: 6 [[<<](#) | [>>](#)]

Whether the rule of temperance depends on the need of the present life?

Objection 1: It would seem that the rule of temperance does not depend on the needs of the present life. For higher things are not regulated according to lower. Now, as temperance is a virtue of the soul, it is above the needs of the body. Therefore the rule of temperance does not depend on the needs of the body.

Objection 2: Further, whoever exceeds a rule sins. Therefore if the needs of the body were the rule of temperance, it would be a sin against temperance to indulge in any other pleasure than those required by nature, which is content with very little. But this would seem unreasonable.

Objection 3: Further, no one sins in observing a rule. Therefore if the need of the body were the rule of temperance, there would be no sin in using any pleasure for the needs of the body, for instance, for the sake of health. But this is apparently false. Therefore the need of the body is not the rule of temperance.

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS141.html](#) Ian finds confirmation of the rule forbidding him to love the things of this life, or to deem any of them desirable for its own sake, and commanding him to avail himself of those things with the moderation of a user not the attachment of a lover, in so far as they are requisite for the needs of this life and of his station."

I answer that, As stated above ([Article \[1\]](#); [Question \[109\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#); [Question \[123\]](#), [Article \[12\]](#)), the good of moral virtue consists chiefly in the order of reason: because "man's good is to be in accord with reason," as Dionysius asserts (Div. Nom. iv). Now the principal order of reason is that by which it directs certain things towards their end, and the good of reason consists chiefly in this order; since good has the aspect of end, and the end is the rule of whatever is directed to the end. Now all the pleasurable objects that are at man's disposal, are directed to some necessity of this life as to their end. Wherefore temperance takes the need of this life, as the rule of the pleasurable objects of which it makes use, and uses them only for as much as the need of this life requires.

Reply to Objection 1: As stated above, the need of this life is regarded as a rule in so far as it is an end. Now it must be observed that sometimes the end of the worker differs from the end of the work, thus it is clear that the end of building is a house, whereas sometimes the end of the builder is profit. Accordingly the end and rule of temperance itself is happiness; while the end and rule of the thing it makes use of is the need of human life, to which whatever is useful for life is subordinate.

Reply to Objection 2: The need of human life may be taken in two ways. First, it may be taken in the sense in which we apply the term "necessary" to that without which a thing cannot be at all; thus food is necessary to an animal. Secondly, it may be taken for something without which a thing cannot be becomingly. Now temperance regards not only the former of these needs, but also the latter. Wherefore the Philosopher says (Ethic. iii, 11) that "the temperate man desires pleasant things for the sake of health, or for the sake of a sound condition of body." Other things that are not necessary for this purpose may be divided into two classes. For some are a hindrance to health and a sound condition of body; and these temperance makes not use of whatever, for this would be a sin against temperance. But others are not a hindrance to those things, and these temperance uses moderately, according to the demands of place and time, and in keeping with those among whom one dwells. Hence the Philosopher (Ethic. iii, 11) says that the "temperate man also desires other pleasant things," those namely that are not necessary for health or a sound condition of body, "so long as they are not prejudicial to these things."

Reply to Objection 3: As stated (ad 2), temperance regards need according to the requirements of life, and this depends not only on the requirements of the body, but also on the requirements of external things, such as riches and station, and more still on the requirements of good conduct. Hence the Philosopher adds (Ethic. iii, 11) that "the temperate man makes use of pleasant things provided that not only they be not prejudicial to health and a sound bodily condition, but also that they be not inconsistent with good," i.e. good conduct, nor "beyond his substance," i.e. his means. And Augustine says (De Morib. Eccl. xxi) that the "temperate man considers the need" not only "of this life" but also "of his station."

Whether temperance is a cardinal virtue?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is not a cardinal virtue. For the good of moral virtue depends on reason. But temperance is about those things that are furthest removed from reason, namely about pleasures common to us and the lower animals, as stated in Ethic. iii, 10. Therefore temperance, seemingly, is not a principal virtue.

Objection 2: Further, the greater the impetus the more difficult is it to control. Now anger, which is controlled by meekness, seems to be more impetuous than desire, which is controlled by temperance. For it is written ([Prov. 27:4](#)): "Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth; and who can bear the violence [impetum] of one provoked?" Therefore meekness is a principal virtue rather than temperance.

Objection 3: Further, hope as a movement of the soul takes precedence of desire and concupiscence, as stated above ([FS, Question \[25\]](#), [Article \[4\]](#)). But humility controls the presumption of immoderate hope. Therefore, seemingly, humility is a principal virtue rather than temperance which controls concupiscence.

On the contrary, Gregory reckons temperance among the principal virtues (Moral. ii, 49).

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[123\]](#), [Article \[11\]](#); [Question \[61\]](#), [Article \[3\]](#)), a principal or cardinal virtue is so called because it has a foremost claim to praise on account of one of those things that are requisite for the notion of virtue in general. Now moderation, which is requisite in every virtue, deserves praise principally in pleasures of touch, with which temperance is concerned, both because these pleasures are most natural to us, so that it is more difficult to abstain from them, and to control the desire for them, and because their objects are more necessary to the present life, as stated above ([Article \[4\]](#)). For this reason temperance is reckoned a principal or cardinal virtue.

Reply to Objection 1: The longer the range of its operation, the greater is the agent's power [virtus] shown to be: wherefore the very fact that the reason is able to moderate desires and pleasures that are furthest removed from it, proves the greatness of reason's power. This is how temperance comes to be a principal virtue.

Reply to Objection 2: The impetuosity of anger is caused by an accident, for instance, a painful hurt; wherefore it soon passes, although its impetus be great. On the other hand, the impetuosity of the desire for pleasures of touch proceeds from a natural cause, wherefore it is more lasting and more general, and consequently its control regards a more principal virtue.

Reply to Objection 3: The object of hope is higher than the object of desire, wherefore hope is accounted the principal passion in the irascible. But the objects of desires and pleasures of touch move the appetite with greater force, since they are more natural. Therefore temperance, which appoints the mean in such things, is a principal virtue.

Whether temperance is the greatest of the virtues?

Objection 1: It would seem that temperance is the greatest of the virtues. For Ambrose says (De Offic. i, 43) that "what we observe and seek most in temperance is the safeguarding of what is honorable, and the regard for what is beautiful." Now virtue deserves praise for being honorable and beautiful. Therefore temperance is the greatest of the virtues.

Objection 2: Further, the more difficult the deed the greater the virtue. Now it is more difficult to control desires and pleasures of touch than to regulate external actions, the former pertaining to temperance and the latter to justice. Therefore temperance is a greater virtue than justice.

Objection 3: Further, seemingly the more general a thing is, the more necessary and the better it is. Now fortitude is about dangers of death which occur less frequently than pleasures of touch, for these occur every day; so that temperance is in more general use than fortitude. Therefore temperance is a more excellent virtue than fortitude.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Rhet. i, 9) that the "greatest virtues are those which are most profitable to others, for which reason we give the greatest honor to the brave and the just."

I answer that, As the Philosopher declares (Ethic. i, 2) "the good of the many is more of the godlike than the good of the individual," wherefore the more a virtue regards the good of the many, the better it is. Now justice and fortitude regard the good of the many more than temperance does, since justice regards the relations between one man and another, while fortitude regards dangers of battle which are endured for the common weal: whereas temperance moderates only the desires and pleasures which affect man himself. Hence it is evident that justice and fortitude are more excellent virtues than temperance: while prudence and the theological virtues are more excellent still.

Reply to Objection 1: Honor and beauty are especially ascribed to temperance, not on account of the excellence of the good proper to temperance, but on account of the disgrace of the contrary evil from which it withdraws us, by moderating the pleasures common to us and the lower animals.

Reply to Objection 2: Since virtue is about the difficult and the good, the excellence of a virtue is considered more under the aspect of good, wherein justice excels, than under the aspect of difficult, wherein temperance excels.

Reply to Objection 3: That which is general because it regards the many conduces more to the excellence of goodness than that which is general because it occurs frequently: fortitude excels in the former way, temperance in the latter. Hence fortitude is greater simply, although in some respects temperance may be described as greater not only than fortitude but also than justice.

