

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Summa Theologica

(Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)

Translated by

Fathers of the English Dominican Province

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OF THE VICES OPPOSED TO PERSEVERANCE (TWO ARTICLES)

We must now consider the vices opposed to perseverance; under which head there are two points of inquiry:

(1) Of effeminacy;

(2) Of pertinacity.

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Whether effeminacy* is opposed to perseverance? [*Mollities, literally 'softness']

Objection 1: It seems that effeminacy is not opposed to perseverance. For a gloss on 1 Cor. 6:9,10, "Nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind," expounds the text thus: "Effeminate--i.e. obscene, given to unnatural vice." But this is opposed to chastity. Therefore effeminacy is not a vice opposed to perseverance.

Objection 2: Further, the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 7) that "delicacy is a kind of effeminacy." But to be delicate seems akin to intemperance. Therefore effeminacy is not opposed to perseverance but to temperance.

Objection 3: Further, the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 7) that "the man who is fond of amusement is effeminate." Now immoderate fondness of amusement is opposed to {eutrapelia}, which is the virtue about pleasures of play, as stated in Ethic. iv, 8. Therefore effeminacy is not opposed to perseverance.

I answer that, As stated above ([Question \[137\]](#), [Articles \[1\],2](#)), perseverance is deserving of praise because thereby a man does not forsake a good on account of long endurance of difficulties and toils: and it is directly opposed to this, seemingly, for a man to be ready to forsake a good on account of difficulties which he cannot endure. This is what we understand by effeminacy, because a thing is said to be "soft" if it readily yields to the touch. Now a thing is not declared to be soft through yielding to a heavy blow, for walls yield to the battering-ram. Wherefore a man is not said to be effeminate if he yields to heavy blows. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethic. vii, 7*) that "it is no wonder, if a person is overcome by strong and overwhelming pleasures or sorrows; but he is to be pardoned if he struggles against them." Now it is evident that fear of danger is more impelling than the desire of pleasure: wherefore Tully says (*De Offic. i*) under the heading "True magnanimity consists of two things: It is inconsistent for one who is not cast down by fear, to be defeated by lust, or who has proved himself unbeaten by toil, to yield to pleasure." Moreover, pleasure itself is a stronger motive of attraction than sorrow, for the lack of pleasure is a motive of withdrawal, since lack of pleasure is a pure privation. Wherefore, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic. vii, 7*), properly speaking an effeminate man is one who withdraws from good on account of sorrow caused by lack of pleasure, yielding as it were to a weak motion.

Reply to Objection 1: This effeminacy is caused in two ways. In one way, by custom: for where a man is accustomed to enjoy pleasures, it is more difficult for him to endure the lack of them. In another way, by natural disposition, because, to wit, his mind is less persevering through the frailty of his temperament. This is how women are compared to men, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic. vii, 7*): wherefore those who are passively sodomitical are said to be effeminate, being womanish themselves, as it were.

Reply to Objection 2: Toil is opposed to bodily pleasure: wherefore it is only toilsome things that are a hindrance to pleasures. Now the delicate are those who cannot endure toils, nor anything that diminishes pleasure. Hence it is written ([Dt. 28:56](#)): "The tender and delicate woman, that could not go upon the ground, nor set down her foot for... softness [Douay: 'niceness']." Thus delicacy is a kind of effeminacy. But properly speaking effeminacy regards lack of pleasures, while delicacy regards the cause that hinders pleasure, for instance toil or the like.

Reply to Objection 3: In play two things may be considered. In the first place there is the pleasure, and thus inordinate fondness of play is opposed to {eutrapelia}. Secondly, we may consider the relaxation or rest which is opposed to toil. Accordingly just as it belongs to effeminacy to be unable to endure toilsome things, so too it belongs thereto to desire play or any other relaxation inordinately.

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Whether pertinacity is opposed to perseverance?

[Donate bitcoin](#). St. Isidore [e-book library/forum](#) » [aquinas](#) » [english](#) » [summa](#) » [SS](#) » [SS138.html](#)ral. xxxi) that pertinacity arises from vainglory. But vainglory is not opposed to perseverance but to magnanimity, as stated above ([Question \[132\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)). Therefore pertinacity is not opposed to perseverance.

Objection 2: Further, if it is opposed to perseverance, this is so either by excess or by deficiency. Now it is not opposed by excess: because the pertinacious also yield to certain pleasure and sorrow, since according to the Philosopher (Ethic. vii, 9) "they rejoice when they prevail, and grieve when their opinions are rejected." And if it be opposed by deficiency, it will be the same as effeminacy, which is clearly false. Therefore pertinacity is nowise opposed to perseverance.

Objection 3: Further, just as the persevering man persists in good against sorrow, so too do the continent and the temperate against pleasures, the brave against fear, and the meek against anger. But pertinacity is over-persistence in something. Therefore pertinacity is not opposed to perseverance more than to other virtues.

On the contrary, Tully says (De Invent. Rhet. ii) that pertinacity is to perseverance as superstition is to religion. But superstition is opposed to religion, as stated above ([Question \[92\]](#), [Article \[1\]](#)). Therefore pertinacity is opposed to perseverance.

I answer that, As Isidore says (Etym. x) "a person is said to be pertinacious who holds on impudently, as being utterly tenacious." "Pervicacious" has the same meaning, for it signifies that a man "perseveres in his purpose until he is victorious: for the ancients called 'vicia' what we call victory." These the Philosopher (Ethic. vii, 9) calls {ischyrognomones}, that is "head-strong," or {idiognomones}, that is "self-opinionated," because they abide by their opinions more than they should; whereas the effeminate man does so less than he ought, and the persevering man, as he ought. Hence it is clear that perseverance is commended for observing the mean, while pertinacity is reproved for exceeding the mean, and effeminacy for falling short of it.

Reply to Objection 1: The reason why a man is too persistent in his own opinion, is that he wishes by this means to make a show of his own excellence: wherefore this is the result of vainglory as its cause. Now it has been stated above ([Question \[127\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#), ad 1; [Question \[133\]](#), [Article \[2\]](#)), that opposition of vices to virtues depends, not on their cause, but on their species.

Reply to Objection 2: The pertinacious man exceeds by persisting inordinately in something against many difficulties: yet he takes a certain pleasure in the end, just as the brave and the persevering man. Since, however, this pleasure is sinful, seeing that he desires it too much, and shuns the contrary pain, he is like the incontinent or effeminate man.

Reply to Objection 3: Although the other virtues persist against the onslaught of the passions, they are not commended for persisting in the same way as perseverance is. As to continence, its claim to praise seems to lie rather in overcoming pleasures. Hence pertinacity is directly opposed to perseverance.