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978-0-521-02951-3 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 43 - Temperance, (2a2ae. 141-154)

Thomas Gilby, O.P.

Excerpt

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## de temperantia

CONSEQUENTER CONSIDERANDUM EST DE TEMPERANTIA.

Et primo quidem de ipsa temperantia;  
secundo de partibus ejus;  
tertio de praeceptis ipsius.

Circa temperantiam autem,

primo considerandum oportet de ipsa temperantia;  
secundo de vitiis oppositis.

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<sup>a</sup>A moral virtue's divisions are discussed below. 2a2ae. 143. This volume will treat of the elements or components of temperance, 'integral parts' (144-5), and of its specific types, 'subjective parts' (146-54); the following volume of its associated virtues, 'potential parts' (155-70).

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## temperance

WE GO ON TO CONSIDER TEMPERANCE.

And first, the virtue itself;  
next, its parts (143–69);<sup>a</sup>  
finally, its commands (170).<sup>b</sup>

Under the first heading we treat of

temperance (141);<sup>c</sup>  
and then of its contrary vices (142).

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<sup>b</sup>Namely the divine precepts relating to temperance in *Exodus* 20 and *Deuteronomy* 6 & 7.

<sup>c</sup>As a generic type of virtue; cf 1a2ae. 60, 4 & 5. ‘Generic’ is here taken strictly, namely with respect to various species, not loosely, as a general condition of all moral virtue.

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SUMMA THEOLOGICÆ, 2a2æ. 141, 1

## Quæstio 141. de ipsa temperantia

Circa primum quærentur octo:

1. utrum temperantia sit virtus;
2. utrum sit virtus specialis;
3. utrum sit solum circa concupiscentias et delectationes;
4. utrum sit solum circa delectationes tactus;
5. utrum sit circa delectationes gustus in quantum est gustus, vel solum in quantum est tactus quidem;
6. quæ sit regula temperantiæ;
7. utrum sit virtus cardinalis seu principalis;
8. utrum sit potissima virtutum.

*articulus 1. utrum temperantia sit virtus*

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod temperantia non sit virtus. Nulla enim virtus repugnat inclinationi naturæ, eo quod in nobis est naturalis aptitudo ad virtutem, ut dicitur in *Ethic.*<sup>2</sup> Sed temperantia retrahit a delectationibus ad quas natura inclinatur, ut dicitur in *Ethic.*<sup>3</sup> Ergo temperantia non est virtus.

2. Præterea, virtutes sunt connexæ ad invicem, ut supra habitum est.<sup>4</sup> Sed aliqui habent temperantiam qui tamen sunt avari vel timidi. Ergo temperantia non est virtus.

3. Præterea, cuilibet virtuti respondet aliquod donum, ut ex supradictis patet.<sup>5</sup> Sed temperantiæ non videtur aliquod donum respondere, quia jam in superioribus dona omnia sunt aliis virtutibus attributa.<sup>6</sup> Ergo temperantia non est virtus.

SED CONTRA est quod Augustinus dicit, *Ea est virtus quæ temperantia nominatur.*<sup>7</sup>

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est,<sup>8</sup> de ratione virtutis est ut inclinet hominem ad bonum. Bonum enim hominis est secundum

<sup>1</sup>cf *De virtutibus* 12<sup>2</sup>*Ethics* II, 1. 1103a25. *Lect.* 1. (The *lectiones*, on Aristotle and Dionysius, are those of the commentaries by St Thomas.)<sup>3</sup>*Ethics* II, 3 & 8. 1104b5 & 1109a14. *Lect.* 3 & 10 <sup>4</sup>1a2æ. 65, 1<sup>5</sup>1a2æ. 68, 4<sup>6</sup>2a2æ. 8, 9, 19, 45, 52, 121 & 139<sup>7</sup>*De musica* VI, 15. PL 32, 1189<sup>8</sup>1a2æ. 55, 3<sup>8</sup>Gift of the Spirit: here used technically for a settled disposition to be moved by God in a manner higher than that of the virtue it complements; cf 1a2æ. 68, 1. Vol. 24 of this series.

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## TEMPERANCE ITSELF

## Question 141. temperance itself

Here there are eight points of inquiry:

1. whether temperance is a virtue;
2. and a special type of virtue at that;
3. whether it is only about desires and pleasures;
4. and only about those of the sense of touch;
5. whether the pleasures of taste enter as such or as affections of touch;
6. what the guiding rule for temperance is;
7. whether temperance is a cardinal or principal virtue;
8. and the most important of the moral virtues.

*article 1. is temperance a virtue?*

THE FIRST POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. Apparently not. To start by appealing to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which recognizes within us a natural aptness for virtue, and this, consequently, is never in conflict with our natural inclinations.<sup>2</sup> Temperance, however, thwarts us about pleasures on which, as Aristotle notes, we are bent by nature.<sup>3</sup> And so it is not a virtue.

2. Again, we have agreed that the virtues are all interconnected.<sup>4</sup> Some people, however, are endowed with temperance who yet lack other virtues: we meet with self-controlled characters who are miserly and cowardly. Temperance, then, is not a virtue.

3. Besides, that there is a Gift of the Spirit<sup>a</sup> matching each of the virtues has been made clear.<sup>5</sup> Yet all the Gifts have already been allocated;<sup>6</sup> consequently temperance is not one of the virtues.

ON THE OTHER HAND there is Augustine telling us, *What is called temperance is indeed a virtue.*<sup>7 b</sup>

REPLY: We have seen that to set human beings towards the good is of the essence of virtue.<sup>8</sup> And good for them, according to Dionysius,<sup>c</sup> means

<sup>b</sup>The *sed contra* of an article is a statement of position, rarely a proof. Often, as here, it is the citation of an *auctoritas*, a received text or established custom. St Augustine of Hippo (*d.* 430).

<sup>c</sup>The Pseudo-Dionysius: sometimes identified in the early Middle Ages with the Areopagite of *Acts 17* or with the founder of the great Abbey of Saint Denys. Probably a Syrian monk of the 5th century. His writings, translated by John Scotus Eriugena, were of great influence. Their Neo-Platonism and mysticism leads us to avoid the literal translation, 'living according to reason', which could suggest the ethics of the Stoics or of the Enlightenment.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 141, 1

rationem esse, ut Dionysius dicit.<sup>9</sup> Et ideo virtus humana est quæ inclinatur ad id quod est secundum rationem. Manifeste\* autem ad hoc inclinatur temperantia; nam in ejus nomine importatur quædam moderatio seu temperies, quam ratio facit. Et ideo temperantia est virtus.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod natura inclinatur in id quod est conveniens unicuique. Unde homo naturaliter appetit delectationem sibi convenientem. Quia vero homo, in quantum hujusmodi, est rationalis, consequens est quod delectationes sunt homini convenientes quæ sunt secundum rationem. Et ab his non retrahitur temperantia, sed potius ab his quæ sunt contra rationem. Unde patet quod temperantia non contrariatur inclinationi naturæ humanæ, sed convenit cum ea. Contrariatur tamen inclinationi naturæ bestialis non subjectæ rationi.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod temperantia secundum quod perfecte habet rationem virtutis non est sine prudentia, qua carent quicumque vitiosi. Et ideo illi qui carent aliis virtutibus, oppositis vitiis subditi, non habent temperantiam quæ est virtus, sed operantur actus temperantiæ ex quadam naturali dispositione, prout virtutes quædam imperfectæ sunt hominibus naturales, ut supra dictum est,<sup>10</sup> vel per consuetudinem acquisitæ, quæ sine prudentia non habent perfectionem rationis, ut supra dictum est.<sup>11</sup>

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod temperantiæ etiam correspondet aliquod donum, scilicet timoris, quo aliquis refrenatur a delectationibus carnis, secundum illud *Psalm.*,<sup>12</sup> *Confige timore tuo carnes meas*. Donum autem timoris principaliter quidem respicit Deum, cujus offensam vitat; et secundum hoc correspondet virtuti spei, ut supra dictum est:<sup>13</sup> secundario autem potest respicere quæcumque aliquis refugit ad vitandam Dei offensam. Maxime autem homo indiget timore divino ad fugiendum ea quæ maxime alliciunt, circa quæ est temperantia: et ideo temperantiæ etiam correspondet donum timoris.

\*Piana: *maxime*, most of all

<sup>9</sup>*De divinis nominibus* 4. *Lect.* 22

<sup>10</sup>1a2ae. 63, 1

<sup>11</sup>1a2ae. 58, 4; 65, 1

<sup>12</sup>*Psalms* 118, 120

<sup>13</sup>2a2ae. 19, 9 ad 1

<sup>9</sup>Humane living is temperate living, with self-control, *egrateia*, a word for strength and mastery.

<sup>9</sup>cf 2a2ae. 26, 4. Also 1a2ae. 10, 3 ad 2; 51, 1; 58, 4 ad 3; 63, 1; 71, 2 ad 3.

<sup>13</sup>Practical wisdom, *prudentia*, *sophrosune*, soundness of mind, good judgment, sanity, self-control, opposed to *mania*, madness, frenzy. It rules all the moral virtues, binding them together, and establishes their mean in practice: 1a2ae. 65, 1;

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living according to intelligence.<sup>9</sup> Human virtue, then, is what sets us towards intelligent living. Clearly temperance does this; its very name expresses a measured temper communicated by intelligence. And so it is a virtue.<sup>d</sup>

Hence: 1. By its nature each thing is bent on what fits it. And so human beings naturally crave an enjoyment that matches them. As such they are intelligent beings; consequently the pleasures they are equal to correspond to intelligence. On these temperance puts no restraint, though it does on those that are against intelligence. Clearly this is to agree and not to clash with the burden of human nature. Which is not to deny that temperance is against the grain for merely animal nature uncomplying with reason.<sup>e</sup>

2. Temperance which possesses the full character of virtue is not without the practical wisdom lacking in anyone in the wrong. If a man is destitute of other virtues, indeed subject to vices opposed to them, then he does not possess the virtue of temperance in the full sense of the word. His behaviour may be temperate from a psychological disposition to act that way. This we have set down to a sort of inchoate virtue, which can be inborn or acquired by custom;<sup>10</sup> however, as we have noted,<sup>11</sup> it is not completely reasonable when practical wisdom is absent.<sup>f</sup>

3. In fact there is a Gift of the Spirit which corresponds to temperance, namely the fear of the Lord restraining us from carnal delights.<sup>g</sup> It is in this sense that we interpret the verse from the *Psalms*, *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear*.<sup>12h</sup> It looks to God first of all and shuns offence to him; accordingly we have seen it as corresponding to the theological virtue of hope.<sup>13i</sup> Yet secondarily it can enter whenever we are faced with other objects that could lead us to offend him, especially with powerful attractions in the field of temperance which calls for a healthy fear. This is the Gift, then, answering to the virtue of temperance.

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2a2ae. 47, 7 & 8. A virtue is a quality of exercising choice, and is not constituted, though it may be aided, by native temperament or the conventions of the community.

<sup>d</sup>cf 1a2ae. 68, 4 ad 1.

<sup>e</sup>The Gift of Fear: 2a2ae. 19. Vol. 33 of this series, on the theological virtue of hope. cf Appendix 8.

<sup>f</sup>The theological virtues go to God himself, and consequently to sin against them is more directly an offence against him than to sin against the moral virtues which consist in right doing within our environment. cf 1a2ae. 61, 1 & 6; 62, 1 & 2; 64, 1 & 4.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2æ. 141, 2

*articulus 2. utrum temperantia sit specialis virtus*

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod temperantia non sit specialis virtus. Dicit enim Augustinus quod *ad temperantiam pertinet Deo se integrum incorruptumque servare.*<sup>2</sup> Sed hoc convenit omni virtuti. Ergo temperantia est virtus generalis.

2. Præterea, Ambrosius dicit quod *in temperantia maxime tranquillitas animi spectatur et quæritur.*<sup>3</sup> Sed hoc pertinet ad omnem virtutem. Ergo temperantia est generalis virtus.

3. Præterea, Tullius dicit quod *decorum ab honesto nequit separari, et quod justa omnia decora sunt.*<sup>4</sup> Sed decorum proprie consideratur in temperantia, ut ibidem dicitur. Ergo temperantia non est specialis virtus.

SED CONTRA est quod Philosophus in *Ethic.* ponit eam specialem virtutem.<sup>5</sup>

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod secundum consuetudinem humanæ locutionis aliqua nomina communia restringuntur ad ea quæ sunt præcipua inter illa quæ sub tali communitate continentur; sicut nomen urbis accipitur antonomastice pro Roma. Sic ergo nomen temperantiæ dupliciter accipi potest.

Uno modo secundum communitatem suæ significationis. Et sic temperantia non est virtus specialis, sed generalis, quia nomen temperantiæ significat quamdam temperiem, idest moderationem quam ratio ponit in humanis operationibus et passionibus; quod est commune in omni virtute morali. Differt tamen ratione temperantia a fortitudine, etiam secundum quod utraque sumitur ut virtus communis: nam temperantia retrahit ab his quæ contra rationem appetitum alliciunt; fortitudo autem impellit ad ea sustinenda vel aggredienda, propter quæ homo refugit bonum rationis.

Si vero consideretur antonomastice temperantia, secundum quod refrenat appetitum ab his quæ maxime alliciunt hominem, sic est specialis virtus, utpote habens, specialem materiam sicut et fortitudo.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod appetitus hominis maxime corrumpitur per ea quibus allicitur homo ad recedendum a regula rationis et legis divinæ. Et ideo sicut ipsum temperantiæ nomen potest dupliciter sumi, uno

<sup>1</sup>cf 1a2æ. 61, 3 & 4. III *Sent.* 33, 1, 1, iii

<sup>2</sup>*De moribus Ecclesie* 1, 15. PL 32, 1322

<sup>3</sup>*De officiis* 1, 3. PL 16, 93

<sup>4</sup>*De officiis* 1, 27

<sup>5</sup>*Ethics* II, 7 & III, 10. 1107b4 & 1117b23. *Lect.* 8 & 19

<sup>a</sup>St Ambrose (*d.* 397).

<sup>b</sup>Cicero (*d.* BC. 43).

<sup>c</sup>The *decorum et honestum*: see below, 2a2æ. 145.

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*article 2. is temperance a special virtue?*

THE SECOND POINT:<sup>1</sup> I. It would not seem so. For when Augustine writes, *It belongs to temperance to keep oneself sound and unspoilt for God,*<sup>2</sup> he is indicating the function of every virtue. On these grounds temperance is a general condition of all virtue.

2. To the same effect there is Ambrose,<sup>a</sup> *What is most looked for and sought from temperance is tranquillity of spirit.*<sup>3</sup>

3. Then also Cicero<sup>b</sup> holds that *the beautiful cannot be separated from the worthy*, and that *all just deeds are beautiful.*<sup>4c</sup> At the same time he notes how beauty is the characteristic of temperance. Which, therefore, is not a particular sort of virtue.

ON THE OTHER HAND Aristotle sets it down as a special virtue.<sup>5</sup>

REPLY: Common usage narrows some terms for a class of objects to conspicuous exemplifications, thus by antonomasia 'the City' stands for Rome.<sup>d</sup> And likewise temperance can be spoken of either broadly or more pointedly.

In the first sense it is not a special type of virtue, but an element common to every virtue; its very name spells a certain temper and control given by intelligence to human activities and feelings by the reason, which is a general feature of all right morality. Notice all the same that if you take temperance and courage, for instance, as expressing qualities in every virtue, even so each strikes a different note, for, when confronted with what could render us unreasonable, temperance restrains our desire for what is an attraction, whereas courage nerves us to endure or attack what is a threat.

By antonomasia, however, temperance means exercising restraint when human attractions are most powerful, and then it is a particular type of virtue which, like courage, carries out a specialized function in its own proper field.

Hence: I. Human desires are spoilt especially by objects so attractive that the sway of reason and God's law will be thrown off in order to get them.<sup>e</sup> And so, as temperance can be taken in two senses, one to refer to a basic

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<sup>d</sup>Antonomasia, name instead: the substitution of an epithet or title for a proper name, or conversely; thus Her Majesty or a Solomon. Thus, also, in the style of the *Summa*, the Philosopher for Aristotle, or the Apostle for St Paul. And in this treatise the moral virtue of temperance will be pointed and, in a sense restricted, to the desires and pleasures of the body-sense.

<sup>e</sup>For the, as it were, reluctant disobedience to reason and divine law involved in sin, see 1a. 48 & 49; 1a2ae. 75-9.



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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 141, 3

modo communiter, alio modo excellenter, ita et integritas quam temperantiae Augustinus attribuit.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod ea circa quae est temperantia maxime possunt animum inquietare, propter hoc quod sunt homini essentialia, ut infra dicitur.<sup>6</sup> Et ideo tranquillitas animi per quamdam excellentiam attribuitur temperantiae, quamvis communiter conveniat omnibus virtutibus.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod quamvis pulchritudo conveniat cuilibet virtuti, excellenter tamen attribuitur temperantiae duplici ratione. Primo quidem secundum rationem communem temperantiae, ad quam pertinet quaedam moderata et conveniens proportio, in qua consistit ratio pulchritudinis, ut patet per Dionysium.<sup>7</sup> Alio modo, quia ea a quibus refrenat temperantia, sunt infima in homine, convenientia ei secundum naturam bestialem, ut infra dicitur.<sup>8</sup> Et ideo ex eis maxime natus est homo deturpari: et per consequens pulchritudo maxime attribuitur temperantiae, quae praecipue turpitudinem hominis tollit.

Et ex eadem ratione honestum maxime attribuitur temperantiae. Dicit enim Isidorus, *Honestus dicitur qui nihil habet turpitudinis: nam honestas dicitur, quasi honoris status.*<sup>9</sup> Qui maxime consideratur in temperantia, quae repellit vitia maxime opprobriosa, ut infra dicitur.<sup>10</sup>

*articulus 3. utrum temperantia sit solum circa concupiscentias et delectationes*

AD TERTIUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod temperantia non sit solum circa concupiscentias et delectationes. Dicit enim Tullius quod *temperantia est rationis in libidinem atque in alios non rectos impetus animi firma et moderata dominatio.*<sup>2</sup> Sed impetus animi dicuntur omnes animae passiones. Ergo videtur quod temperantia non sit solum circa concupiscentias et delectationes.

2. Praeterea, virtus est circa difficile et bonum.<sup>3</sup> Sed difficilius videtur esse temperare timorem, maxime circa pericula mortis, quam moderari concupiscentias et delectationes, quae propter dolores et pericula mortis

<sup>6</sup>Below art. 4 & 5      <sup>7</sup>*De divinis nominibus 4. Lect. 5*      <sup>8</sup>art. 7 & 8. 1a2ae. 142, 4

<sup>9</sup>*Etymologiarum* x, ad H. PL 82, 379      <sup>10</sup>2a2ae. 142, 4

<sup>1</sup>cf III *Sent.* 33, 2, 2, ii. *In Ethic.* II, *Lect.* 8; III, *Lect.* 19 & 21

<sup>2</sup>*De inventione oratoria* II, 54

<sup>3</sup>*In Ethic.* II, *Lect.* 3

<sup>1</sup>Lower levels: here used in no scornful or patronizing sense. It is already beginning to appear how the treatise will reserve temperance to the control of certain apparently peripheral and surface gratifications, and leave the deeper matter of our attachment to creatures for consideration in terms of divine charity and, in particular, of the Gift of Knowledge, 2a2ae. 9.

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condition and the other to a particular peak of virtue, so too can the moral soundness of which Augustine is speaking.

2. The objects which engage temperance can be highly disturbing to the spirit; after all, and we shall labour the point later on,<sup>6</sup> they are essential to human living. Hence tranquillity of mind, though a general feature of every virtue, is especially prominent in temperance.

3. Beauty goes with every virtue, nevertheless it excels with temperance, and in two respects. First, because measured and seemly proportion, which Dionysius describes as of the essence of beauty,<sup>7</sup> is the mark of temperateness in general. Next, because the specific virtue of temperance exercises control over the lower levels of human life, namely those of our animal nature, a point to be developed later on.<sup>8f</sup> There are forces here of debasement, and because temperance plays such a part in holding them down it is especially credited with beauty.

And, by the same token, with moral fineness. Isidore<sup>g</sup> says that *a man of honour has nothing cheap about him, honourableness being defined as a state of dignity*.<sup>9</sup> This is a distinction which temperance deserves, for, as will be shown,<sup>10</sup> it wards off most disgraceful vices.<sup>h</sup>

*article 3. is temperance engaged only with lusts and pleasures?*

THE THIRD POINT:<sup>1</sup> I. It would seem not. Cicero describes temperance as *the firm and moderate sway of reason over libidinous and other wanton urges of spirit*.<sup>2</sup> Such are all the passions of the soul. Seemingly, then, temperance is not restricted to lusts and delights.

2. Again, virtue is about what is difficult and precious.<sup>3</sup> Now it seems harder to control fears, especially of mortal danger, than desires and pleasures, which, Augustine observes, count for little compared with pain

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It may be recalled here that temperance (like courage) is not a virtue of will-power keeping the feelings under restraint, like a whipper-in with hounds, but enters into the feelings themselves. St Thomas takes up a position opposed to the Stoics; cf 1a2æ. 59, 2; 60, 4 & 5. The present treatise could be entitled, Well-tempered Sensuousness.

<sup>g</sup>St Isidore of Seville (*d.* 366).

<sup>h</sup>*Bonum honestum*: a thing of worth, a value desirable for its own sake, not as *utile*, for something else. The treatise will think of it in terms of moral worth, cf below 2a2æ. 145, and, drawing on the Latin Stoics, will emphasize social respectability and recognized probity, a somewhat bourgeois *honnêteté*. Yet medieval sentiments, especially according to the courtly tradition, about *honestas*, honour, also enter. It stood for a quality more personal and delicate: certainly for something more than in 'an honest fellow' or 'an honest meal'. When Cicero applied the term to things of beauty and grace he was not following classical usage.