Virtues

Questions 59 and 60 of the Summa of the Summa

Of Moral Virtue in Relation to the Passions

And How the Moral Virtues Differ From One Another

Article One: Whether Moral Virtue Is a Passion?

On the Contrary: “It is stated in *Ethic* ii. 5 that *passions are neither virtues nor vices.”*  (PK)

I answer that: “Passions are not in themselves good or evil. For man’s good or evil is something in reference to reason: wherefore the passions, considered in themselves, are referable both to good and to evil, for as much as they may accord or disaccord with reason.” (TA)

Article Two: Whether There Can Be Moral Virtue with Passion?

On the contrary: “Augustine says (*De Civ, Dei xiv, 6) If the will is perverse , these movements,* viz,, the passions, *are perverse also; but if it is upright, they are not only blameless, but even* virtue does not exclude the passions, but is consistent with them.”

I Answer that: The Stoics and Peripatetics disagreed on this point, as Augustine relates (*De Civ, Dei ix. 4).* For the Stoics held that the soul’s passions cannot be in a wise or virtuous man: whereas the Perpatetics, who were found by Aristotle, as Augustine says (*Ibidl),* maintained that the passions are compatible with moral virtue, ....”

...Hence Aristotle says (*Ethic.* ii. 3) that *some describe virtue as being a kind of freedom from passion and disturbance; this is incorrect, because the assertion should be qualified:* they should have said virtue is freedom from those passion , that are not as they should be...(TA)

Article Three: Whether Sorrow Is Compatible with Moral Virtue?

On the Contrary: Christ was perfect in virtue. But there was sorrow in Him, for He said (Mt. 26:38) *My soul is sorrowful even unto death.* Therefore sorrow is compatible with virtue.” (TA)

I answer that: Since man has to deal with slight sins (1 John 1:8: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,* man must have to deal with sorrow in virtue. The just virtuous man may not struggle with grave sin, but even just sin at all may bring a sense of sorrow to some degree.

Question 59 Article Three I Answer that cont.

(PM) “Consequently the evil which is contrary to this good can be in a wise man, and can cause some to have moderate sorrow. (PM)” (TA) ...Moderated sorrow ...which ought to make us sorrowful, could be a mark of virtue and prove to be a deterrent for evil, because just as good is more readily sought for the sake of pleasure, so is evil more likely to be shunned on account of sorrow...(PM)

Article Five: Whether There Can Be Moral Virtue without Passion?

Objection One: Moral virtue can be without passion because the more perfect moral virtue is, the more does it overcome the passions. As a result the better side of moral virtue is altogether without passion. (PM)

On the contrary: “*No man is just who rejoices not in just deeds.* As stated in *Ethic* i.8, But joy is a passion. Therefore justice cannot be without passion and still less can the other virtues be.” (TA)

I answer that: Moral virtues which are about the passions as about their proper matter cannot be without passions. Otherwise it would follow that moral virtue makes the sensitive appetite altogether idle. However the function of virtue is to enable the power under reason of their proper activities to direct the sensitive appetite to its proper regulated movements... Those moral virtues, however, which are not about the passions but about operations, can be without passions. Such a virtue is justice, because it applies the will to its proper act, which is not a passion. Nevertheless, joy results from the act of justice, at least in the will, in which case it is not a passion. In the will the act of justice can break forth into the passion of joy even though justice is not a passion. (PM) “And if this joy be increased through the perfection of justice, it will overflow into the sensitive appetite; in so far as the lower powers follow he movement of the higher as per what was stated before in Q. 17, A, 7. Q. 25and A.3. Therefore “by reason of this kind of overflow, the more perfect a virtue is, the more does it cause passion.” (TA)

Q & A For Question 59

1. Is moral virtue a passion? “Passions are not in themselves good or evil. For man’s good or evil is something in reference to reason: wherefore the passions, considered in themselves, are referable both to good and to evil, for as much as they may accord or disaccord with reason.” (TA)

Q & A for Question 59 cont.

2. Can moral virtue be with passion? The Stoics and Peripatetics disagreed on this point, as Augustine relates (De Civ, Dei ix. 4). For the Stoics held that the soul’s passions cannot be in a wise or virtuous man: whereas the Perpatetics, who were found by Aristotle, as Augustine says (Ibidl), maintained that the passions are compatible with moral virtue, ....”

...Hence Aristotle says (Ethic. ii. 3) that some describe virtue as being a kind of freedom from passion and disturbance; this is incorrect, because the assertion should be qualified: they should have said virtue is freedom from those passion , that are not as they should be...(TA)

3. Is sorrow compatible with moral virtue? Since man has to deal with slight sins (1 John 1:8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, man must have to deal with sorrow in virtue. The just virtuous man may not struggle with grave sin, but even just sin at all may bring a sense of sorrow to some degree. (PM) “Consequently the evil which is contrary to this good can be in a wise man, and can cause some to have moderate sorrow. (PM)” (TA) ...Moderated sorrow ...which ought to make us sorrowful, could be a mark of virtue and prove to be a deterrent for evil, because just as good is more readily sought for the sake of pleasure, so is evil more likely to be shunned on account of sorrow...(PM)

4. Can moral virtue be without passion? Moral virtues which are about the passions as about their proper matter cannot be without passions. Otherwise it would follow that moral virtue makes the sensitive appetite altogether idle. However the function of virtue is to enable the power under reason of their proper activities to direct the sensitive appetite to its proper regulated movements... Those moral virtues, however, which are not about the passions but about operations, can be without passions. Such a virtue is justice, because it applies the will to its proper act, which is not a passion. Nevertheless, joy results from the act of justice, at least in the will, in which case it is not a passion. In the will the act of justice can break forth into the passion of joy even though justice is not a passion. (PM) “And if this joy be increased through the perfection of justice, it will overflow into the sensitive appetite; in so far as the lower powers follow he movement of the higher as per what was stated before in Q. 17, A, 7. Q. 25and A.3. Therefore “by reason of this kind of overflow, the more perfect a virtue is, the more does it cause passion.” (TA)

Question 60 How the Moral Virtues Differ from One Another

Article Two: Whether Moral Virtues about Operations are Different from those that are about Passions?

Question 60 Cont. Article Two On the Contrary cont.

On the contrary: “The Philosopher reckons justice to be about operations; and temperance, fortitude, and gentleness, about passions (*Ethic,* ii. 3, 7; v, I, *seqq*.) ... “ (TA)

Article Three: Whether There Is Only One Moral Virtue about Operations?

I answer that: “All the moral virtues that are about operations agree in the one general notion of justice, which is in respect of something due to another...But the thing due is not of the same kind in all these virtues: for something is due to an equal in one way, to a superior, in another way, to an inferior, in yet another and the nature of a debt differs according as it arises from a contract, a promise, or a favor already conferred. And corresponding to these various kinds of debt there are various virtues e.g. *Religion,* whereby we pay our debt to God; *Piety* [respect], whereby we pay our debt to our parents or to our country; *Gratitude,* whereby we pay our debt to our benefactors, and so forth... ”(TA)

Q & A for Question 60

1. Are moral virtues about operations different from those that are about passions? Yes, “The Philosopher reckons justice to be about operations; and temperance, fortitude, and gentleness, about passions (Ethic, ii. 3, 7; v, I, seqq.) ... “ (TA)

2. Is there only one moral virtue about operations? Yes, in the sense that justice is about each of the virtues even if those are about passions primarily. TA says that, “All the moral virtues that are about operations agree in the one general notion of justice, which is in respect of something due to another...But the thing due is not of the same kind in all these virtues: for something is due to an equal in one way, to a superior, in another way, to an inferior, in yet another and the nature of a debt differs according as it arises from a contract, a promise, or a favor already conferred. And corresponding to these various kinds of debt there are various virtues e.g. Religion, whereby we pay our debt to God; Piety [respect], whereby we pay our debt to our parents or to our country; Gratitude, whereby we pay our debt to our benefactors, and so forth... \*(TA)