

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 jus-

tice 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.