

QUESTION 145

Moral Uprightness

Next we have to consider moral uprightness (*honestas*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) How is the morally upright (*honestum*) related to virtue (*quomodo honestum se habeat ad virtutem*)? (2) How is the morally upright related to beauty (*ad decorum*)? (3) How is the morally upright related to the useful and the pleasurable (*ad utile et delectabile*)? (4) Is moral uprightness a part of temperance?

Article 1

Is the morally upright the same as virtue?

It seems that the morally upright is not the same as virtue (*honestum non sit idem virtuti*):

Objection 1: In *Rhetorica* Tully says that the morally upright is “what is sought for its own sake.” By contrast, virtue is sought not for its own sake but for the sake of happiness (*felicitas*); for in *Ethics* 1 the Philosopher says that happiness “is the reward for virtue and the end.” Therefore, the morally upright is not the same as virtue.

Objection 2: According to Isidore, moral uprightness “bespeaks, as it were, a state of honor.” But honor is owed to many things other than virtue, since, as *Ethics* 1 puts it, “It is praise that is properly owed to virtue.” Therefore, moral uprightness is not the same as virtue.

Objection 3: As the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 8, “The principal element of virtue consists in an interior act of choice.” But moral uprightness seems rather to involve one’s exterior communal life (*magis videtur ad exteriorem conversationem pertinere*)—this according to 1 Corinthians 14:40 (“Let all things be done uprightly (*honeste*) and in an orderly way among you”). Therefore, moral uprightness is not the same as virtue.

Objection 4: Moral uprightness seems to consist in exterior riches (*in exterioribus divitiis*)—this according to Ecclesiasticus 11:14 (“Good things and evil things, life and death, poverty and riches (*paupertas et honestas*): both are from God”). But virtue does not consist in exterior riches. Therefore, moral uprightness is not the same as virtue.

But contrary to this: In *De Officiis* 1 and *Rhetorica* 2 Tully divides the morally upright into the four principal virtues, and virtue is likewise divided into them. Therefore, the morally upright is the same as virtue.

I respond: As Isidore says, moral uprightness “bespeaks, as it were, a state of honor.” Hence, from this it seems that what is called upright is worthy of honor. But as was explained above (q. 103, a. 2 and q. 144, a. 2), honor is owed to excellence. Now a man’s excellence is thought of most of all in terms of virtue, since, as Physics 7 puts it, virtue “is the disposition of the perfect toward the best.” And so ‘the morally upright’ is a reference, properly speaking, to the same thing as ‘virtue’.

Reply to objection 1: As the Philosopher explains in *Ethics* 1, among the things that are desired for their own sake, some are desired *only* for their own sake and *never* for the sake of anything else; such is the case with happiness (*felicitas*), i.e., the ultimate end. However, some things are desired for their own sake in the sense that they would have a mark of goodness in themselves even if no other good accrued to us through them, and yet they are also desirable for the sake of something else in the sense that they lead us to some more perfect good. And it is in this latter way that the virtues should be desired for their own sake. Hence, in *Rhetorica* 2 Tully says, “There are some things that allure us by their own force and attract us by their worthiness, e.g., virtue, truth, and scientific knowledge.” And this is sufficient for the character of the morally upright.

Reply to objection 2: Of those things other than virtue that are honored, some are more excellent than virtue, e.g., God and beatitude. Things of this sort are not known to us through experience in the way that the virtues are, given that we act in accord with the virtues every day. And this is why virtue has

more of a claim to the name ‘morally upright’.

On the other hand, the other things, which stand below virtue, are honored insofar as they contribute to the operation of virtue, e.g., nobility, power, and wealth. For as the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 4, “Things of this sort are honored by some, but in truth only the good individual should be honored.” But an individual is good by reference to virtue. And so praise is owed to virtue insofar as it is desirable for the sake of something else, whereas honor is owed to it insofar as it is desirable for its own sake. And on this score virtue has the character of the morally upright.

Reply to objection 3: As has been explained, the morally upright implies an honor that is due. But as was explained above (q. 103, a. 2), honor is an attestation to someone’s excellence (*contestatio quaedam de excellentia alicuius*).

Now testimony is given only about things that are known. But an interior act of choice is not known to a man except through exterior acts. And so it is an exterior interchange that has the character of the morally upright insofar as it shows forth an interior rectitude. And for this reason moral uprightness consists *at its root (radicaliter)* in one’s interior act of choice and consists *as a sign (significative)* in one’s exterior communal life.

Reply to objection 4: According to the opinion of the many (*secundum vulgarem opinionem*), the excellence of riches makes a man worthy of honor, and this is why the name ‘uprightness’ (*honestas*) is sometimes transferred to exterior prosperity.

Article 2

Is the morally upright the same as the beautiful?

It seems that the morally upright is not the same as the beautiful (*honestum non sit idem quod decorum*):

Objection 1: The nature of the morally upright is taken from the appetite, since what is morally upright is desired in its own right (*per se appetitur*). But the beautiful has to do instead with the sense of sight (*decorum magis respicit aspectum*), which the beautiful pleases. Therefore, the beautiful is not the same as the morally upright.

Objection 2: Beauty requires a certain sort of clarity, which involves the notion of *glory*. But the morally upright has to do with *honor*. Therefore, since, as was explained above (q. 103, a. 1), honor and glory differ from one another, it seems that the morally upright likewise differs from the beautiful.

Objection 3: As was explained above (a. 1), the morally upright is the same as virtue. But some instances of beauty are contrary to virtue; hence, Ezechiel 16:15 says, “Trusting in your beauty, you have prostituted yourself in your renown.” Therefore, the morally upright is not the same as beauty.

But contrary to this: In 1 Corinthians 12:23-24 the Apostle says, “Those members of ours that are less upright (*inhonesta*) are clothed with a more abundant uprightness (*honestas*), whereas our upright members require nothing further.” Now what he here calls our less upright members are our unseemly members (*membra turpia*), whereas what he calls our upright members are our beautiful members (*membra pulchra*). Therefore, the morally upright and the beautiful seem to be the same thing.

I respond: As can be gathered from the words of Dionysius in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, the things that come together for the notion of the beautiful or decorous are *clarity* and *due proportion* (*claritas et debita proportio*). For he says that God is called beautiful “as the cause of the harmony and clarity of the universe of things.”

Hence, the beauty of the human body consists in an individual’s having bodily members that are well-proportioned, along with a certain clarity of the appropriate color.

Similarly, spiritual beauty consists in an individual’s communal life (*conversatio hominis*)—i.e.,

his actions—being well-proportioned in accord with the spiritual clarity of reason. Now this pertains to the character of moral uprightness, which we have claimed to be the same as virtue, where virtue in turn moderates all human affairs in accord with reason. And so moral uprightness is the same as spiritual beauty. Hence, in 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, “By moral uprightness (*honestas*) I mean intelligible beauty, which we properly call spiritual beauty.” And later he adds, “There are many things beautiful to the eye that are less properly called upright.”

Reply to objection 1: An object that moves the appetite is an apprehended good. But if something appears beautiful in the very act of apprehension, then it is thought of as fitting and good; this is why Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, that “what is beautiful and good is lovable to all.” Hence, the morally upright itself is likewise rendered desirable insofar as it has spiritual beauty. Hence, in *De Officiis* 1 Tully, too, says, “You see the form itself and, as it were, the face of moral uprightness, and if it were seen with the eyes, it would, as Plato says, arouse a wondrous love of wisdom.”

Reply to objection 2: As was explained above, glory is an effect of honor, since by the fact that an individual is honored or praised, he becomes clearly known in the eyes of others. And so just as what is worthy of honor is the same as the glorious, so, too, the morally upright is the same as the beautiful.

Reply to objection 3: This objection goes through for the case of bodily beauty. Still, one could claim that an individual may likewise commit spiritual fornication because of spiritual beauty, in the sense that he becomes proud with respect to his moral uprightness itself—this according to Ezechiel 28:17 (“Your heart was puffed up in your beauty; you lost your wisdom in your beauty”).

Article 3

Does the morally upright differ from the useful and the pleasurable?

It seems that the morally upright does not differ from the useful and the pleasurable:

Objection 1: The morally upright is what is desired for its own sake. But pleasure is desired for its own sake, since, as the Philosopher points out in *Ethics* 10, “It seems ridiculous to ask why an individual wants to experience pleasure.” Therefore, the morally upright does not differ from the pleasurable.

Objection 2: Riches are included under *useful good*, since in *Rhetorica* 2 Tully says, “There is something that ought to be sought not because of its force and nature, but because of its fruit and usefulness, viz., money.” But riches have the character of uprightness; for Ecclesiasticus 11:14 says, “Poverty and *honestas* [i.e., riches] are from God,” and 13:2 says, “He who has fellowship with someone more upright [i.e., with someone who is richer] takes a burden upon himself.” Therefore, the morally upright does not differ from the useful.

Objection 3: In *De Officio* Tully proves that nothing can be useful unless it is morally upright. And the same view is held by Ambrose in *De Officio*. Therefore, the useful does not differ from the morally upright.

But contrary to this: In 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, “The morally upright is what is to be desired for its own sake, whereas the useful has to be ordered toward something else.”

I respond: The morally upright agrees with the useful and the pleasurable in existing in the same subject, but it differs from them in concept (*tamen differt ratione*).

As has been explained (a. 2), something is called morally upright insofar as it has a certain beauty that derives from its being ordered by reason (*in quantum habet quendam decorum ex ordinatione rationis*). But being ordered in accord with reason is naturally fitting for a man, and each thing takes pleasure in what is fitting for it. And so, as the Philosopher proves in *Ethics* 1 about the operation of virtue, the morally upright is naturally pleasurable for a man. However, not everything pleasurable is morally upright, since there can be something that is fitting according to the sensory power but not

according to reason, and this sort of pleasurable thing lies outside of a man's reason, where it is reason that brings his nature to perfection.

Again, virtue itself, which is morally upright on its own (*secundum se*), is ordered toward something else as its end, viz., happiness (*felicitas*). And on this score the morally upright and the useful and the pleasurable exist in the same subject but differ in concept. For something is called *morally upright* insofar as it has an excellence worthy of honor because of its spiritual beauty, whereas it is called *pleasurable* insofar as it quiets the appetite and *useful* insofar as it is ordered toward something else. However, in most cases something is pleasurable rather than useful and upright, since, as *Ethics* 2 notes, everything useful and upright is in some sense pleasurable, but not vice versa.

Reply to objection 1: The morally upright is what is desired for its own sake by the *rational* appetite, which tends toward what is fitting to reason. By contrast, the pleasurable is desired for its own sake by the *sentient* appetite.

Reply to objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1), riches are called 'upright' either (a) according to the opinion of the many, who honor riches, or (b) insofar as riches are ordered as instruments toward the acts of the virtues.

Reply to objection 3: Tully and Ambrose mean to be claiming that nothing can be truly and absolutely speaking useful if it is incompatible with moral uprightness, since it would have to be incompatible with the man's ultimate end, which is the good according to reason—even though it could be useful in a certain respect, viz., with respect to some particular end.

Moreover, they do not mean to be claiming that everything useful, considered by itself, attains to the character of the morally upright.

Article 4

Should the morally upright be posited as a part of temperance?

It seems that the morally upright should not be posited as a part of temperance:

Objection 1: It is impossible for the same thing to be both a part and a whole in the same respect. But as Tully claims in *Rhetorica* 2, temperance is a part of moral uprightness. Therefore, moral uprightness is not a part of temperance.

Objection 2: Esdra 3:21 says, "Wine makes all thoughts upright." But the use of wine—especially the excessive use of wine, which seems to be what is spoken of here—belongs more to intemperance than to temperance. Therefore, moral uprightness is not a part of temperance.

Objection 3: The morally upright is something worthy of honor. But as the Philosopher points out in *Rhetic 1*, individuals who are just and individuals who are courageous are the most honored of all. Therefore, moral uprightness belongs not to temperance but rather to justice or fortitude. Hence, as 2 Maccabees 6:28 reports, Eleazar said, "I courageously suffer an honorable death (*honestas morte*) for the sake of the holiest and most serious of laws."

But contrary to this: Macrobius posits moral uprightness (*honestas*) as a part of temperance. Again, in *De Officiis* 1 Ambrose attributes moral uprightness specifically to temperance.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 2), moral uprightness is a sort of spiritual beauty. But what is opposed to the beautiful is the unseemly. Now opposites especially make one another manifest. And so moral uprightness seems especially to belong to temperance, which repels what is the most unseemly and most indecent for a man, viz., brutish lusts (*brutales voluptates*).

Hence, the good of reason, whose role it is to moderate and to temper perverse sentient desires (*cuius est moderari et temperare concupiscentias pravas*), is especially understood in the very name 'temperance'. So, then, insofar as moral uprightness is attributed to temperance for a certain *special*

reason, it is posited as a part of temperance—not, to be sure, as a *subjective part* or as an *adjoined virtue*, but instead as an *integral part*, in the sense that it is a certain condition belonging to temperance (*quaedam eius conditio*).

Reply to objection 1: Temperance is posited as a *subjective part* of the morally upright, where moral uprightness is taken in its *general* sense. But moral uprightness is not on this acceptation posited as a part of temperance.

Reply to objection 2: In the case of those who are inebriated, wine makes their thoughts ‘upright’ in their own estimation, since it seems to them that their thoughts are great and worthy of honor.

Reply to objection 3: Because of the excellence of a greater good, more honor is owed to justice and fortitude than to temperance.

However, as is clear from what has been said, temperance is owed more honor because it restrains vices that are more shameful. And in this sense moral uprightness is attributed more to temperance, in accord with the rule given by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:23, viz., that “those members of ours that are less upright (*inhonesta*) are clothed with a more abundant uprightness (*habent maiorem honestatem*),” i.e., with an uprightness that removes what is not upright.