

QUESTION 15

Consenting, Which is an Act of The Will concerning the Means to an End

Next we have to consider the act of consenting (*consensus*). On this topic there are four questions: (1) Is consenting an act of an appetitive power or an apprehensive power? (2) Does consenting belong to brute animals? (3) Does consenting concern the end or a means to the end? (4) Does consenting to an act belong only to the higher part of the soul?

Article 1

Does consenting belong only to the apprehensive part of the soul?

It seems that consenting (*consentire*) belongs only to the apprehensive part of the soul:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says that consenting is attributed to higher reason (cf. *ST* 1, q. 79, a. 9). But ‘reason’ names an apprehensive power. Therefore, consenting belongs to an apprehensive power.

Objection 2: Consenting (*consentire*) is ‘sensing or feeling together with’ (*simul sentire*). But sensing belongs to an apprehensive power (*apprehensiva potentia*). Therefore, so does consenting.

Objection 3: Just as ‘assenting’ (*assentire*) expresses the intellect’s application to something, so too does ‘consenting’ (*consentire*). But assenting belongs to the intellect, which is an apprehensive power. Therefore, consenting likewise belongs to an apprehensive power.

But contrary to this: In *De Fide* 2 Damascene says, “If someone makes a judgment and does not love [what he judges], then there is no determination, i.e., consent (*non est sententia, idest consensus*). But loving belongs to an appetitive power (*vis apprehensiva*). Therefore, so does consenting.

I respond: ‘Consenting’ implies the *application* of the sensory power to something. Now it is proper to the *sensory power* to have cognition of present things; for the *imagining power* apprehends the likenesses of bodies, even in the absence of the things which they are likenesses of, whereas the *intellect* apprehends universal concepts (*universales rationes*), which it can apprehend indifferently both when the singular things are present and when they are absent. And since the act of an appetitive power is a certain inclination toward the thing itself, the very application of the appetitive power to the thing, so that it cleaves to that thing, receives the name ‘sensing’ or ‘feeling’ (*sensus*) in virtue of a certain likeness—in the sense that it has a certain experience of the thing it cleaves to by being pleased with that thing (*inquantum complacet sibi in ea*). Hence, Wisdom 1:1 says, “Feel the Lord in goodness” (*sentite de domino in bonitate*). Accordingly, consenting is the act of an appetitive power.

Reply to objection 1: As *De Anima* 3 says, “The will exists in reason.” Hence, when Augustine attributes consenting to reason, he is taking ‘reason’ in the sense in which it includes the will.

Reply to objection 2: Sensing or feeling belongs, properly speaking, to an apprehensive power, but, as has been explained, because of the likeness it bears to a certain experience, it belongs to an appetitive power.

Reply to objection 3: Assenting (*assentire*) is, as it were, is ‘sensing or feeling with respect to something else’ (*ad aliud sentire*), and so it implies a certain distance from what is being assented to. But consenting implies ‘sensing or feeling together with’, and so it implies a certain connection with what is consented to (*quandam coniunctionem ad id cui consentitur*). And so the will, whose role is to tend toward the thing itself, is more properly said to *consent*, whereas, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 59, a. 2), the intellect, whose operation is not accompanied by a movement toward the thing, but just the opposite, is more properly said to *assent*—even though the one word is often used in place of the other.

One can also reply that the intellect assents insofar as it is moved by the will.

Article 2

Does consenting belong to brute animals?

It seems that consenting belongs to brute animals:

Objection 1: ‘Consenting’ implies a channeling of the appetite to a single thing. But the appetites of brute animals are channeled to a single thing. Therefore, consenting exists in brute animals.

Objection 2: When what is prior is removed, what is posterior is removed. But consenting precedes the execution of an act. Therefore, if consenting did not exist in brute animals, then there would be no execution of acts in them. But this is clearly false.

Objection 3: Men are sometimes said to consent to doing something out of some passion, e.g., sense desire (*concupiscentia*) or anger. But brute animals act out of passion. Therefore, consenting exists in them.

But contrary to this: Damascene says, “After the judgment, a man disposes and loves what has been judged on the basis of deliberating (*disponit et amat quod ex consilio iudicatum est*), and this is called determining (*sententia*), i.e., consenting.” But deliberating does not exist in brute animals. Therefore, neither does consenting.

I respond: Properly speaking, consenting does not exist in brute animals. The reason is that ‘consenting’ implies applying an appetitive movement to doing something. But *applying* an appetitive movement toward doing something belongs to a thing that has the appetitive movement within its power (*in cuius potestate est appetitivus motus*); for instance, touching the rock belongs to the staff, but *applying* the staff to touching the rock belongs to someone who has it within his power to move the staff.

However, brute animals do not have appetitive movements within their power; instead, in them such movements proceed from an instinct of nature. Hence, a brute animal does, to be sure, have an appetitive movement (*brutum animal appetit quidem*), but it does not *apply* its appetitive movement to anything. And because of this a brute animal is not properly said to consent; rather, the only sort of nature that is properly said to consent is a rational nature, which has its appetitive movement within its own power and is able to apply it or not to apply it to this or that thing.

Reply to objection 1: In brute animals the channeling of the appetite to something occurs only passively. By contrast, ‘consenting’ implies that the channeling of the appetite is not just passive but rather active.

Reply to objection 2: When what is prior is removed, the only posterior thing that is removed is that which properly follows from what is prior. However, if something is able to follow from more than one prior thing, then it is not because one of the prior things is removed that the posterior thing is removed. For instance, if hardening can be effected by both heat and cold (for bricks are hardened by fire, and frozen water is hardened by cold), then it is not the case that if heat is removed, hardening is removed.

Now the execution of an act follows not only from consenting but also from a forceful appetite of the sort that is found in brute animals.

Reply to objection 3: Men who act out of passion are able not to follow their passions. But this is not the case with brute animals. Therefore, the arguments are not parallel.

Article 3

Does consenting concern the end?

It seems that consenting concerns the end:

Objection 1: That for the sake of which a thing is such-and-such is itself all the more

such-and-such (*propter quod unumquodque, illud magis*). But it is for the sake of the end that we consent to the means to that end. Therefore, we consent all the more to the end.

Objection 2: An intemperate man's action is his end, just as a virtuous man's action is his end. But an intemperate man consents to his own action. Therefore, it is possible for consenting to concern the end.

Objection 3: As was explained above (q. 13, a. 1), desire concerning the means to an end is choosing. Therefore, if consenting concerned only the means to an end, it would seem to differ in no way from choosing. But this is clearly false according to Damascene, who says, "After disposing," which he had previously called 'determining' (*sententia*), "comes the act of choosing." Therefore, it is not the case that consenting concerns only the means to an end.

But contrary to this: In the same place Damascene says, "Determining (*sententia*) [read: consenting (*consensus*)] is when a man disposes and loves what has been judged on the basis of deliberating." But deliberating concerns only the means to an end. Therefore, so does consenting.

I respond: 'Consenting' names the application of an appetitive movement to something that is in the power of the one doing the applying. Now in the order of actions, one must take into account (a) apprehending an end, then (b) desiring the end, then (c) deliberating about the means to the end, and then (d) desiring a means to the end.

Now our appetite naturally tends toward the ultimate end, and thus the application of an appetitive movement to an apprehended end has the character of *simple willing* (*habet rationem simplicis voluntatis*) and not the character of *consenting* (*non rationem consensus*).

On the other hand, the things that come after the ultimate end, insofar as they are ordered to the end, fall under deliberation, and so consenting can concern them, insofar as an appetitive movement is applied to what has been judged on the basis of deliberation. But the appetitive movement toward the end is not applied to deliberating; rather deliberating is applied to it, since deliberating presupposes desiring the end. But desiring the means to the end presupposes deliberation's determination (*praesupponit determinationem consilii*). And so consenting is, properly speaking, applying an appetitive movement to deliberation's determination. Hence, since deliberating concerns only the means to the end, consenting, properly speaking, concerns only the means to the end.

Reply to objection 1: Just as we know conclusions through principles even though there is no scientific knowledge (*scientia*) of the principles, but something greater, viz., understanding (*intellectus*), so too we consent to the means to an end for the sake of the end even though there is no consenting to the end, but something greater, viz., willing (*voluntas*).

Reply to objection 2: The intemperate man has for his end the action's pleasure, and it is for the sake of the pleasure, rather than for the sake of the action itself, that he consents to the action.

Reply to objection 3: Choosing adds to consenting a certain relation to that which is such that something else is preferred to it, and so after consenting, there is still choosing.

For it can happen that through deliberation one finds several means that lead to the end, and as long as each of them is pleasing, each of them is consented to. But out of the many means that please us, we give one preference by choosing it.

On the other hand, if there is just one means that is pleasing, then consenting and choosing differ only conceptually (*in ratione*) and not in reality—so that it is called 'consenting' to the extent that acting in the way in question is pleasing, whereas it is called 'choosing' to the extent that the act in question is preferred to those acts that are not pleasing.

Article 4

Does consenting to an act always belong to higher reason?

It seems that consenting to an act does not always belong to higher reason (*ratio superior*):

Objection 1: As *Ethics* 10 says, “Pleasure (*delectatio*) follows upon an action and brings it to completion (*perficit eam*), in the way the beauty brings youth to completion.” But as Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, consenting to pleasure belongs to lower reason. Therefore, consenting to an act does not belong only to higher reason.

Objection 2: An action to which we consent is said to be voluntary. But many powers have the role of producing voluntary actions. Therefore, it is not just higher reason that consents to an act.

Objection 3: As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 12, “Higher reason is intent on inspecting and consulting eternal realities.” But oftentimes a man consents to an act not because of eternal reasons, but because of certain temporal reasons—or even because of the passions of the soul. Therefore, it is not the case that consenting to an act belongs only to higher reason.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says, “The mind cannot efficaciously decide to perpetrate a sin unless the mind’s intention, which is the highest power for moving the bodily members to an action or restraining them from an action, yields to and complies with a bad action.”

I respond: The final determination (*finalis sententia*) always belongs to the superior (*ad eum qui est superior*), whose role it is to pass judgment on the others. For as long as the judgment still remains to be made, there is as yet no final determination. But it is clear that it is higher reason that has to pass judgment on all things, since we judge sensible things by means of reason, whereas we pass judgment on things that pertain to human reasons (*ad rationes humanas*) in accord with God’s reasons (*secundum rationes divinas*), which belong to higher reason. And so as long as it is uncertain whether or not something is to be resisted in accord with God’s reasons, no judgment of reason has the character of a final determination.

Now consenting to an act is the final determination concerning things to be done. And so consenting to an act belongs to higher reason—though this, as was explained above (a. 1), is in the sense in which the will is included in reason.

Reply to objection 1: Consenting to an action’s pleasure belongs to higher reason in the same way that consenting to the action does.

However, consenting to the pleasure of the *thought* of an action belongs to lower reason in the same way that thinking about the action belongs to lower reason. And yet higher reason has judgment (a) concerning the thinking or not thinking itself, insofar as it is considered as an action [in its own right], and, similarly, (b) concerning the pleasure that follows from the thinking.

But insofar as the thinking is taken as ordered toward another action, it belongs to lower reason. For what is ordered toward something else belongs to an art or power that is lower than the end toward which it is ordered; hence, the art that concerns the end is called an architectonic, i.e., principal, art.

Reply to objection 2: Since actions are called voluntary by reason of the fact that we consent to them, it is not necessary that consenting should belong to any power except the will (*voluntas*), from which they are called voluntary (*voluntarium*). And, as has been explained (a. 1), the will exists in reason.

Reply to objection 3: Higher reason is said to consent not only because it always moves one to act in accord with eternal reasons, but also because it [sometimes] fails to dissent in a way that accords with eternal reasons (*secundum rationes aeternas non dissentit*).