

QUESTION 81

The Sentient Appetite

Next we have to consider sensuality (*sensualitas*) [or the sentient appetite]. And on this topic there are three questions: (1) Is sensuality a purely appetitive power? (2) Is it divided into the irascible and the concupiscible as into diverse powers? (3) Do the irascible and concupiscible powers obey reason?

Article 1

Is sensuality a purely appetitive power?

It seems that sensuality (*sensualitas*) is not a purely appetitive power, but a cognitive power as well:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine says, “The soul’s sensual movement, which is directed toward the bodily senses, is common to us and the beasts.” But the bodily senses powers fall under the cognitive powers. Therefore, sensuality is a cognitive power.

Objection 2: Whatever falls under the same division seems to belong to the same genus. But in *De Trinitate* 12 Augustine divides sensuality off against higher reason and lower reason, both of which involve cognition. Therefore, sensuality is likewise a cognitive power.

Objection 3: In the temptation of man sensuality plays the role of the serpent. But in the temptation of the first parents the serpent’s role was to introduce and propose the sin, and this role belongs to a cognitive power. Therefore, sensuality is a cognitive power.

But contrary to this: Sensuality is defined as the desire for things that have to do with the body.

I respond: The name ‘sensuality’ (*sensualitas*) seems to be taken from ‘sensual movement’ (*sensualis motus*)—which is what Augustine is talking about in *De Trinitate* 12—in the way that the name of a power is taken from its act, e.g., the visual power (*visus*) from the act of vision (*visio*).

Now sensual movement is a desire (*appetitus*) that follows upon sentient apprehension. For the act of an apprehensive power is not called a movement in as proper a sense as the action of the appetitive power is, since the operation of an apprehensive power finds its perfection in the fact that the things apprehended exist in the one apprehending them, whereas the operation of an appetitive power finds its perfection in the fact that the one who has the desire is inclined toward the desirable thing. And so the operation of an apprehensive power is like rest, whereas the operation of an appetitive power is more like a movement. Hence, ‘sensual movement’ means the operation of an appetitive power. And so ‘sensuality’ is a name of the sentient appetite.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine’s claim that the soul’s sensual movement is directed at the bodily senses means not that the senses are included under sensuality, but rather that the movement of sensuality is a sort of inclination toward the bodily senses, viz., when we desire the things that are apprehended by the bodily senses. And in this way the bodily senses are, as it were, entries (*praeambulae*) into sensuality.

Reply to objection 2: Sensuality is divided off from higher reason and lower reason insofar as they all share in the act of motion; for the cognitive power, which is what higher and lower reason have to do with, is a moving power, just like the appetitive power, which sensuality has to do with.

Reply to objection 3: The serpent not only displayed and proposed the sin, but also incited them to commit the sin (*inclinavit in effectum peccati*). And it is in this last regard that sensuality is signified by the serpent.

Article 2

Is the sentient appetite divided into the irascible and the concupiscible as into diverse powers?

It seems that the sentient appetite is not divided into the irascible (*irascibilis*) and the concupiscible (*concupiscibilis*) as into diverse powers:

Objection 1: As *De Anima 2* explains, the same power is related to a pair of contraries, in the way that the power of sight is related to white and black. But the agreeable (*conveniens*) and the harmful (*nocivum*) are contraries. Therefore, since the concupiscible has to do with the agreeable and the irascible with the harmful, it seems to be the same power of the soul that is both irascible and concupiscible.

Objection 2: The sentient appetite is directed only at things that are agreeable to the senses. But what is agreeable to the senses is the object of the concupiscible power. Therefore, there is no sentient appetitive power that differs from the concupiscible power.

Objection 3: Hatred (*odium*) resides in the irascible power; for in *Super Matthaenum* Jerome says, “Let us have in the irascible power a hatred for vices.” But since hatred is the contrary of love (*amor*), it is in the concupiscible power. Therefore, the same power is both concupiscible and irascible.

But contrary to this: Gregory of Nyssa and Damascene posit two powers, the irascible and the concupiscible, as parts of the sentient appetite.

I respond: The sentient appetite is generically one faculty, which is called sensuality, but it is divided into two powers, which are the species of the sentient appetite, viz., the irascible and the concupiscible. To see this clearly, consider that in a natural corruptible thing there has to be not only (a) an inclination toward pursuing what is agreeable and avoiding what is harmful, but also (b) an inclination toward resisting the corrupting or contrary things that pose an obstacle to what is agreeable and that inflict what is harmful—in just the way that fire has a natural inclination not only (a) to recede from a lower place that is not agreeable to it and to tend toward a higher place that is agreeable to it, but also (b) to resist what corrupts it or impedes it.

Therefore, since the sentient appetite is an inclination that follows upon sentient apprehension in the way that a natural appetite is an inclination that follows upon a natural form, it must be the case that in the sentient part of the soul there are two appetitive powers: (a) one through which the soul is simply inclined to pursue those things that are agreeable according to the senses and to avoid those things that are harmful, and this is called the *concupiscible* power; and (b) a second through which the soul resists opposing things that pose obstacles to what is agreeable and that inflict harm, and this is called the *irascible* power. Hence, the object of the irascible power is said to be the difficult (*arduum*), because the irascible power tends toward overcoming contraries and winning out over them.

Moreover, these two inclinations are not reducible to a single principle. For sometimes the soul, in opposition to the inclination of the concupiscible power, inflicts hardships upon itself in order to fight against contraries in accord with the inclination of the irascible power. The passions of the irascible power even seem to fight against the passions of the concupiscible power, since, in most cases, aroused concupiscence diminishes anger, and aroused anger diminishes concupiscence.

This point is also clear from the fact that the irascible power is, as it were, a promoter and defender of the concupiscible power when it rises up against obstacles to those agreeable things sought by the concupiscible power, and when it fights against the harmful things that the concupiscible power shrinks from. And for this reason all the passions of the irascible power take their origin from passions of the concupiscible power and terminate in the latter. For instance, anger arises from an already inflicted pain

and, having gained vengeance, terminates in joy. It is also for this reason that, as is explained in *De Animalibus* 8, struggles among animals are over concupiscible objects like food and sexual pleasure.

Reply to objection 1: The concupiscible power is directed toward both the agreeable and the disagreeable. By contrast, the irascible power is directed toward resisting the disagreeable that stands in opposition to it.

Reply to objection 2: Just as, in keeping with what was pointed out above (q. 78, a. 2), among the apprehensive powers of the sentient part of the soul there is an estimative power that perceives things that are not effecting changes in the sensory powers, so also in the sentient appetite there is a power that does not seek what is appropriate for delighting the senses, but instead seeks something that is appropriate insofar as it is useful to the animal for its own defense.

Reply to objection 3: Hatred absolutely speaking pertains to the concupiscible power. However, because of the pugnacity caused by hatred, it is also able to pertain to the irascible power.

Article 3

Do the irascible and concupiscible powers obey reason?

It seems that the irascible and concupiscible powers do not obey reason:

Objection 1: The irascible and concupiscible powers are parts of sensuality. But sensuality does not obey reason; this is why it is signified by the serpent, as Augustine points out in *De Trinitate* 12. Therefore, the irascible and concupiscible powers do not obey reason.

Objection 2: Whatever obeys a given thing does not fight against it. But the irascible and concupiscible powers fight against reason—this according to the Apostle in Romans 7:23 (“But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind”). Therefore, the irascible and concupiscible powers do not obey reason.

Objection 3: Just as the appetitive power is lower than the rational part of the soul, so too is the sentient [apprehensive] power. But the sentient [apprehensive] part of the soul does not obey reason, since we do not hear or see when we want to. Therefore, it is likewise not the case that the powers of the sentient appetite, viz., the irascible and the concupiscible, obey reason.

But contrary to this: Damascene says that what is obedient to reason and susceptible to persuasion by reason is divided into concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) and anger (*ira*).

I respond: There are two ways in which the irascible and concupiscible powers obey the higher part of the soul, where one finds the intellect (or reason) and will. The first of these ways has to do with reason and the second has to do with the will.

The irascible and concupiscible powers obey *reason* with respect to their *acts*. The reason for this is that in the other animals the sentient appetite is apt to be moved by the estimative power, in the way that a sheep, taking the wolf to be an enemy, fears it. But as was explained above (q. 78, a. 4), in man the estimative power is replaced by the cogitative power, which some call ‘particular reason’ because it brings together intentions of individuals (*collativa intentionum individualium*). This is why the sentient appetite is apt to be moved by the cogitative power in a man. Now particular reason is itself apt to be moved and directed by ‘universal reason’, and so there are syllogisms in which singular conclusions are derived from universal propositions. Thus, it is clear that universal reason gives commands to (*imperat*) the sentient appetite, which is divided into the concupiscible and irascible, and that this appetite obeys it. And since deriving singular conclusions from universal principles is the work of discursive reason and not of simple intellective understanding (*non est opus simplicis intellectus sed rationis*), the irascible and

concupiscible powers are said to obey reason rather than the intellect. Moreover, anyone can experience within himself that when he applies universal considerations, anger and fear and other such [passions] are mitigated or, as the case may be, instigated.

Likewise, the sentient appetite is subject to the *will* as regards *execution*, which is effected through the moving power. For in the other animals movement follows immediately upon an appetitive act (*appetitum*) of the concupiscible and irascible powers; for instance, when the sheep becomes fearful of the wolf, it immediately flees, since in sheep there is no higher appetitive act that might fight against this. By contrast, a man is not immediately moved by an appetitive act of the concupiscible or irascible powers; rather, he awaits the command of the will (*expectatur imperium voluntatis*), which is a higher appetite. For in the case of all ordered moving powers, a mover effects movement only by the power of the first mover; thus, the lower appetite is not sufficient to effect movement unless the higher appetite consents—which is what the Philosopher is saying in *De Anima* 3: “The higher appetite moves the lower appetite in the way that a higher sphere moves a lower sphere.”

Therefore, these are the ways in which the irascible and concupiscible powers are subject to reason.

Reply to objection 1: Sensuality is signified by the serpent as regards what is proper to the sentient part of the soul, whereas ‘irascible’ and ‘concupiscible’ name the sentient appetite as regards its act, to which the irascible and concupiscible powers are induced by reason, as has been explained.

Reply to objection 2: As the Philosopher says in *Politics* 1, “One finds in the animal both despotic rule (*despoticus principatus*) and constitutional rule (*politicus principatus*). For the soul rules the body with a despotic rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetite with a constitutional and royal rule.” Despotic rule is that by which someone rules slaves, who do not have the ability to resist the ruler in any of his commands, since they have nothing of their own (*quia nihil sui habent*). By contrast, political and royal rule is that by which someone rules free men, who, even if they are subject to the rule of the leader, nonetheless have something of their own (*habent aliquid proprium*) by which they are able to resist the leader’s command.

So, then, the soul is said to rule the body with despotic rule because the bodily members cannot in any way resist the soul’s rule, but instead at the soul’s desire the hand and foot move immediately, along any member of the body that is apt to be moved by a voluntary movement. By contrast, the intellect, i.e., reason, is said to rule the irascible and concupiscible powers with constitutional rule, since the sentient appetite has something of its own by which it is able to resist reason’s command. For the sentient appetite is apt to be moved not only by the estimative power in other animals and the cogitative power (which is ruled by universal reason) in man, but also by the imaginative power and the sensory power. Hence, we experience the irascible and concupiscible powers resisting reason when we sense or imagine something pleasant that reason forbids, or something unpleasant that reason prescribes. And so the fact that the irascible and concupiscible powers fight against reason in some cases does not rule out their being obedient to reason.

Reply to objection 3: The exterior sensory powers need for their acts exterior sensible things by which they are affected and whose presence is not within reason’s power. By contrast, the interior powers, both appetitive and apprehensive, do not need exterior things. And so they are subject to the command of reason, which is able not only to instigate or mitigate the affections of the appetitive power, but also to form the imaginative power’s phantasms.