

QUESTION 30

Concupiscence

Next we have to consider concupiscence or sentient desire (*concupiscentia*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Does concupiscence exist just in the sentient appetite? (2) Is concupiscence a specific passion? (3) Is it the case that some instances of concupiscence are natural and others are non-natural? (4) Is concupiscence infinite or unlimited (*infinita*)?

Article 1

Does concupiscence or sentient desire exist just in the sentient appetite?

It seems that concupiscence or sentient desire (*concupiscentia*) does not exist just in the sentient appetite:

Objection 1: As Wisdom 6:21 (“Concupiscence for wisdom (*concupiscentia sapientiae*) leads to the everlasting kingdom”) puts it, there is a certain concupiscence directed toward wisdom. But the sentient appetite cannot be directed toward wisdom. Therefore, concupiscence does not exist just in the sentient appetite.

Objection 2: The desire for God’s commandments (*desiderium mandatorum Dei*) does not exist in the sentient appetite; in fact, in Romans 7:18 the Apostle says, “There dwells not in me, i.e., in my flesh, that which is good.” But the desire for God’s commandments falls under concupiscence—this according to Psalm 118:20 (“My soul has had concupiscence (*concupivit*) to desire (*desiderare*) Your justifications”). Therefore, concupiscence does not exist just in the sentient appetite.

Objection 3: Every power is such that its proper good is an object of concupiscence for it (*cuilibet potentiae est concupiscibile proprium bonum*). Therefore, concupiscence exists in every power of the soul and not just in the sentient appetite.

But contrary to this: Damascene says, “The non-rational that is obedient to and persuadable by reason is divided into *concupiscence* and *anger*. This is the non-rational part of the soul, passive and appetitive.” Therefore, concupiscence exists in the sentient appetite.

I respond: As the Philosopher says in *Rhetoric* 1, “Concupiscence is a desire for what is pleasurable (*appetitus delectabilis*).” Now as will be explained below (q. 31, aa. 3-4), there are two kinds of pleasure (*delectatio*), (a) one kind that is found in an intelligible good, i.e., a good of reason, and (b) another kind that is found in what is good according to the sensory power. The first kind of pleasure seems to belong only to the soul, whereas the second kind belongs to the soul and the body, since the sensory power is a power in a corporeal organ. Hence, what is good according to the sensory power is a good of the whole composite (*bonum totius coniuncti*). Now it seems to be the desire for this kind of pleasure that is *concupiscence*, since, as the name ‘con-cupiscence’ suggests, it pertains to both the soul and the body together. Hence, concupiscence, properly speaking, exists in the sentient appetite and in the concupiscible power, which takes its name from concupiscence.

Reply to objection 1: The desire (*appetitus*) for wisdom, or for other spiritual goods, is sometimes called ‘concupiscence’ either (a) because of a certain likeness or (b) because of the intensity of the desire which belongs to the higher part of the soul and from which there is an overflow into the lower appetite, so that (i) even the lower appetite itself simultaneously tends in its own way toward a spiritual good by following the higher appetite and so that (ii) even the body itself serves spiritual goods, just as Psalm 83:3 says (“My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God”).

Reply to objection 2: Properly speaking, ‘desire’ (*desiderium*) can pertain not only to the lower appetite but also to the higher appetite. For ‘desire’ (*desiderium*) does not imply any union [of soul and body] in longing for something (*non importat aliquam consociationem in cupiendo*), but instead implies a simple movement toward the thing that is desired (*simplicem motum in rem desideratum*).

Reply to objection 3: Each power of the soul is such that it desires its proper good by a *natural* appetite that does not follow upon an apprehension.

By contrast, desiring the good by means of an appetite belonging to a soul (*appetitu animali*), which does follow upon an apprehension, pertains solely to an appetitive power. And to desire something as a good pleasurable to the senses—which is, properly speaking, what it is to have concupiscence (*quod proprie est concupiscere*)—pertains to the concupiscible power.

Article 2

Is concupiscence a specific passion of the concupiscible power?

It seems that concupiscence is not a specific passion of the concupiscible power:

Objection 1: The passions are distinguished from one another by their objects. But the object of the concupiscible power is what is pleasurable to the senses; and, according to the Philosopher in *Rhetoric* 1, this is likewise the object of concupiscence. Therefore, concupiscence is not a specific passion in the concupiscible power.

Objection 2: In 83 *Quaestiones* Augustine says, “Avid desire (*cupiditas*) is the love of transient things, and so it is not distinct as such from love.” But all the specific passions are distinct from one another. Therefore, concupiscence is not a specific passion in the concupiscible power.

Objection 3: As was explained above (q. 23, a. 4), each passion of the concupiscible power is such that some specific passion in the concupiscible power is opposed to it. But there is no specific passion in the concupiscible power that is opposed to concupiscence. For Damascene says, “An expected good gives rise to concupiscence, whereas a present good gives rise to joy; similarly, an expected evil gives rise to fear, whereas a present evil gives rise to sadness.” From this it seems that just as sadness is opposed to joy, so fear is opposed to concupiscence. But fear exists in the irascible power and not in the concupiscible power. Therefore, it is not the case that concupiscence is a specific passion in the concupiscible power.

But contrary to this: Concupiscence is caused by love and tends toward pleasure, and these are passions of the concupiscible power. And so concupiscence is distinct as a specific passion from the other passions of the concupiscible power.

I respond: As has been explained (q. 23, a. 1), the object of the concupiscible power is, generally speaking, the good that is pleasurable to the senses. Hence, it is by reference to the differences dividing this object that the diverse passions of the concupiscible power are distinguished from one another.

Now diversity in an object can result either (a) from the nature of the object itself or (b) from a diversity in its power to act. A diversity of active objects that stems from the nature of the thing makes for a *material* difference among the passions, whereas a diversity that stems from the power to act makes for a *formal* difference among the passions in accord with which the passions differ from one another in species.

However, the kind of power to effect movement that belongs to the end or good itself when it is *present* in reality is different from its power to effect movement when it is *absent*. For insofar as it is present, it brings about [the appetite’s] coming to rest in it (*facit in seipso quiescere*), whereas insofar as it is absent, it brings about movement toward itself. Hence, what is pleasurable to the senses is a cause of *love* insofar as the appetite adapts and conforms to it in a certain way, whereas it is a cause of *concupiscence* insofar as, when absent, it draws the appetite to itself, and it is a cause of *pleasure* insofar as, when present, it brings the appetite to rest in it. So, then, concupiscence is a passion that *differs in species* both from love and from pleasure.

On the other hand, it is having concupiscence for *this* or *that* pleasurable thing that makes for

numerically diverse instances of concupiscence.

Reply to objection 1: The pleasurable good is not, absolutely speaking, the object of concupiscence; instead, it is the pleasurable good *as something absent* (*sub ratione absentis*), in the same way that the object of memory is the sensible thing *as past*. For particular conditions of this sort make for diverse species among the passions or likewise among those powers of the sentient part of the soul that are directed toward particulars.

Reply to objection 2: This predication is based on the cause [of avid desire] and not on its essence (*illa praedicatio est per causam, non per essentiam*). For avid desire (*cupiditas*) is not love *per se*, but is instead an effect of love.

An alternative reply is that Augustine is here taking ‘avid desire’ (*cupiditas*) broadly for any appetitive movement that can be directed toward a future good. On this reading it includes both love and hope within itself.

Reply to objection 3: The passion that is directly opposed to concupiscence—i.e., the passion that has the same relation to the bad that concupiscence has to the good—is unnamed. But because, like fear, it is directed toward an absent evil, fear is sometimes put in its place, just as hope* is sometimes put in the place of avid* desire* (*cupiditas*). For small goods or evils are, as it were, left out of account, and so hope and fear, which are directed toward the arduous good and the arduous bad, are posited for every movement of the appetite that is directed toward a future good or evil.

Article 3

Are some instances of concupiscence natural and others non-natural?

It seems not to be the case that some instances of concupiscence are natural and others are non-natural:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), concupiscence belongs to an appetite belonging to a soul. But *natural appetite* is divided off against *appetite belonging to a soul*. Therefore, no instance of concupiscence is natural.

Objection 2: Material diversity does not make for a diversity of species, but only makes for a diversity in number; and this sort of diversity does not fall under an art. But if some instances of concupiscence were natural and some non-natural, then they would differ only in a way that corresponds to diverse desirable things, which would make for a material difference and only a numerical diversity. Therefore, instances of concupiscence should not be divided into the natural and the non-natural.

Objection 3: As is clear from *Physics* 2, *reason* is divided off against *nature*. Therefore, if some non-natural instance of concupiscence existed in a man, it would have to be rational. But this cannot be the case; for since concupiscence is a passion, it belongs to the sentient appetite and not to the will, which is reason’s appetite. Therefore, it is not the case that any instances of concupiscence are non-natural.

But contrary to this: In *Ethics* 3 and *Rhetoric* 1 the Philosopher claims that some instances of concupiscence are natural and some are non-natural.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), concupiscence is a desire for the pleasurable good. Now there are two ways in which something is pleasurable:

(a) In the first way, something is pleasurable because it is fitting for the nature of an animal; examples are food, drink and other things of this sort. Concupiscence for what is pleasurable in this sense is called *natural*.

(b) In the second way, something is pleasurable because it is fitting for an animal on the basis of apprehension, as when someone apprehends something as good and fitting and as a result takes pleasure

in it. And concupiscence for what is pleasurable in this sense is called *non-natural*, and it is often called ‘avid desire’ (*cupiditas*) instead of ‘concupiscence’ (*concupiscentia*).

The former, or natural, instances of concupiscence are common to both men and the other animals, because they involve something that is fitting and pleasurable for both by nature. And all men agree in these; that is why in *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher calls them “common and necessary.”

By contrast, the latter instances of concupiscence are peculiar to men, to whom it is proper to regard something that goes beyond what nature requires as good and fitting. Hence, in *Rhetoric* 1 the Philosopher says that the former instances of concupiscence are “non-rational” (*irracionales*), whereas the latter instances are “accompanied by reason” (*cum ratione*). And because different individuals think in different ways, in *Ethics* 3 the latter instances are also called “proper and apposite,” i.e., beyond the natural (*supra naturales*).

Reply to objection 1: The same thing that is desired by a natural appetite can be desired by an appetite belonging to a soul when that thing is apprehended. This is the sense in which there can be natural concupiscence with respect to food and drink and other things of this sort that are desired naturally.

Reply to objection 2: The distinction between natural concupiscence and non-natural concupiscence is not just a material distinction, but it is also in some sense formal, insofar as it proceeds from the distinction among the active objects.

Now the object of an appetite is an apprehended good. Hence, a distinction among acts of apprehending corresponds to the distinction among active objects. More specifically, (a) something is apprehended as fitting by an absolute apprehension, and natural concupiscence—which the Philosopher calls “non-rational” in the *Rhetoric*—is caused by this sort of apprehension; and (b) something is apprehended with deliberation, and non-natural concupiscence—which is thereby said to be “accompanied by reason” in the *Rhetoric*—is caused by this sort of apprehension.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 78, a. 4 and q. 83, a. 3), in a man there exists not only universal reason, which belongs to the intellectual part of the soul, but also particular reason, which belongs to the sentient part. Accordingly, concupiscence that is accompanied by reason can also belong to the sentient appetite. Furthermore, the sentient appetite can also be moved by universal reason through the mediation of the particular imagination.

Article 4

Is concupiscence infinite or unlimited?

It seems that concupiscence is not infinite or unlimited (*infinita*):

Objection 1: The object of concupiscence is the good, which has the character of an end. But as *Metaphysics* 2 says, when one posits something infinite, he rules out an end. Therefore, concupiscence cannot be infinite.

Objection 2: Concupiscence is directed toward a fitting good, since it arises from love. But since what is unlimited is not proportionate to anything (*sit improporionatum*), it cannot be fitting. Therefore, concupiscence cannot be unlimited.

Objection 3: It is impossible to traverse infinitely many things (*infinita non est transire*), and so among such things it is impossible to reach a last one (*non est pervenire ad ultimum*). But in someone who has concupiscence pleasure is effected by his attaining the last thing. Therefore, if concupiscence were infinite, it would follow that pleasure is never effected.

But contrary to this: In *Politics* 1 the Philosopher says, “Since concupiscence is unlimited, men desire infinitely many things (*in infinitum concupiscentia existente homines infinita desiderant*).”

I respond: As was explained above (a. 3), there are two sorts of concupiscence, the one natural and the other non-natural.

Thus, natural concupiscence cannot be actually unlimited. For natural concupiscence has to do with what nature requires, but nature always intends something finite and fixed (*finitum and certum*). Hence, a man never has concupiscence for an unlimited amount of food or an unlimited amount of drink (*numquam homo concupiscit infinitum cibum vel infinitum potum*). However, just as it is possible for there to be in nature a potential infinity via succession, so too this sort of concupiscence can be infinite via succession—so that, namely, having acquired food, or any other thing that nature requires, a man desires food again in place of the other food; for when corporeal goods of this sort arrive, they do not last forever, but run out. Hence, in John 4:13 our Lord said to the Samaritan woman, “Whoever drinks this water will thirst again.”

By contrast, non-natural concupiscence is altogether unlimited. For as has been explained (a. 3), non-natural concupiscence follows reason, and it belongs to reason to proceed *ad infinitum*. Hence, someone who has concupiscence for riches can desire to be rich but not to any fixed limit; instead, he can desire simply that he should be as rich as possible.

Moreover, according to the Philosopher in *Politics* 1, there is another possible explanation for why some instances of concupiscence are finite and some unlimited. For concupiscence directed toward an end is always unlimited, since an end, such as health, is desired *per se*; and so greater health is desired to a greater degree, and so on *ad infinitum*—just as, if white expands sight *per se* (*album per se disgregat*), then a brighter white expands sight to a greater degree. By contrast, concupiscence that is directed toward the means to an end is not unlimited; instead, the means to an end is desired to the degree that it is suitable for the end. Hence, those who have riches as their end have concupiscence for riches *ad infinitum*, whereas those who desire riches for the necessities of life desire limited riches that are sufficient for the necessities of life, as the Philosopher says in the same place. And the same line of reasoning holds for concupiscence with respect to any other things as well.

Reply to objection 1: Everything that is the object of concupiscence (*omne quod concupiscitur*) is taken as something finite, either because it is finite in reality insofar as it is once actually desired, or because it is finite insofar as it falls under apprehension. For it cannot be apprehended as infinite (*sub ratione infiniti*), since, as *Physics* 3 puts it, “The infinite is such that however much one takes of its quantity, it is always possible to take something besides that.”

Reply to objection 2: In a certain sense reason has infinite power, insofar as it is able to consider something *ad infinitum*, as is clear in the case of the addition of numbers and of lines. Hence, the infinite taken in a certain way is proportionate to reason. For even the universal, which reason apprehends, is in a sense infinite, insofar as it contains infinitely many singulars in potentiality.

Reply to objection 3: In order for someone to have pleasure, it is not required that he acquire everything that he desires; rather, what is required is that he take pleasure in each desired thing that he acquires.