

QUESTION 24

Goodness and Badness in the Passions of the Soul

Next we have to consider goodness and badness in the passions of the soul. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Can moral goodness and moral badness be found in the passions of the soul? (2) Is every passion of the soul morally bad? (3) Does every passion add to or diminish an act's goodness or badness? (4) Is any passion good or bad by its species?

Article 1

Is any passion morally good or morally bad?

It seems that no passion is either morally good or morally bad:

Objection 1: Moral goodness and badness are proper to man, since, as Ambrose says in *Super Lucam*, "Morals are properly called 'human'." But the passions are not proper to men; instead, they are shared in common with other animals as well. Therefore, no passion of the soul is either morally good or morally bad.

Objection 2: As Dionysius says in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, "Man's goodness or badness has to do with being in accord with reason or being against reason (*secundum rationem vel praeter rationem*)." But as was explained above (q. 22, a. 3), the passions of the soul exist in the sentient appetite and not in reason. Therefore, they are not relevant to a man's goodness or badness, i.e., to the moral good.

Objection 3: In *Ethics 2* the Philosopher says, "We are neither praised nor blamed for passions." But it is because of what is morally good and morally bad that we are praised or blamed. Therefore, the passions are not morally good or morally bad.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine, speaking about the passions, says, "They are bad if the love is bad, and they are good if the love is good."

I respond: The passions of the soul can be thought of in two ways: (a) in their own right (*secundum se*) and (b) insofar as they are subject to the rule of reason and will (*secundum quod subiacent imperio rationis et voluntatis*).

Thus, if they are thought of in their own right, viz., insofar as they are certain movements of a non-rational appetite, then in this sense they do not have moral goodness or badness—which, as was explained above (q. 18, a. 5), depends on reason.

However, if they are thought of insofar as they are subject to the rule of reason and will, then in this sense they do have moral goodness and badness. For the sentient appetite is closer to reason and will themselves than are the exterior members of the body, and yet the movements and acts of the exterior members are morally good or bad insofar as they are voluntary. Hence, *a fortiori*, the passions themselves, insofar as they are voluntary, can be called morally good or morally bad. And they are called voluntary either because they are commanded by the will or because they are not prohibited by the will.

Reply to objection 1: The passions, considered in their own right, are common to men and other animals. However, insofar as they are governed by reason, they are proper to men.

Reply to objection 2: As *Ethics 1* says, even the lower appetitive powers are called rational to the extent that they "participate in some way in reason."

Reply to objection 3: The Philosopher is claiming that we are not praised or blamed for the passions considered absolutely. But he does not deny that the passions can be made praiseworthy or blameworthy to the extent that they are regulated by reason (*secundum quod a ratione ordinantur*). Thus he adds, "For it is not the one who becomes fearful or angry who is praised or blamed; rather, it is the one who becomes fearful or angry in a certain way"—viz., in a way that is in accord with reason or beyond the limits of reason (*secundum rationem vel praeter rationem*).

Article 2

Is every passion of the soul morally bad?

It seems that every passion of the soul is morally bad:

Objection 1: In *De Civitate Dei* 9 Augustine says, “Some call the passions of the soul sicknesses or disturbances of the soul (*morbos vel perturbationes animae*).” But every sickness or disturbance of the soul is something morally bad. Therefore, every passion of the soul is morally bad.

Objection 2: Damascene says, “An operation is a movement in accord with nature (*secundum naturam*), whereas a passion is a movement beyond the limits of nature (*praeter naturam*).” But that which is against nature in the movements of the soul has the character of a sin and a moral evil. This is why he says elsewhere that the devil “turned away from what is in accord with nature and turned toward what is against nature.” Therefore, passions of this sort are morally bad.

Objection 3: Everything that leads one toward sin has the character of badness. But passions of the sort in question lead one toward sin; hence, in Romans 7:5 the passions are called “the passions of the sins.” Therefore, it seems that the passions are morally bad.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 14 Augustine says, “Upright love has all the upright affections. For they fear to sin, they desire to persevere, they sorrow in their sins, they rejoice in their good works.”

I respond: On this question there was a disagreement (*diversa fuit sententia*) between the Stoics and the Peripatetics. For the Stoics claimed that all the passions are bad, whereas the Peripatetics claimed that moderated passions are good (*dixerunt passiones moderatas esse bonas*). Even though this difference does, to be sure, sound like a big one, there is in reality either no difference at all or a small one, once one takes into consideration what the two sides mean.

For the Stoics did not distinguish between the sensory power and the intellect and, as a result, they did not distinguish between the sentient appetite and the intellective appetite. Hence, they did not distinguish the passions of the soul from the movements of the will in keeping with the fact that the passions of the soul exist in the sentient appetite, whereas the simple movements of the will exist in the intellective appetite. Instead, they called every reasonable movement (*omnem rationabilem motum*) of the appetitive part ‘an act of will’, whereas they called any movement that went beyond the limits of reason ‘a passion’. And so, following their opinion, in *De Tusculanis Quaestionibus* 3 Tully calls all the passions “sicknesses of the soul.” From there he argues, “Those who are sick are not healthy, and those who are not healthy are foolish.” And this is why we call the foolish ‘unhealthy’.

By contrast, the Peripatetics call all the movements of the sentient appetite ‘passions’. Hence, they deem them good when they are moderated by reason and bad when they fall outside of reason’s moderation. From this it is clear that, in the same book, Tully, in arguing against the position of the Peripatetics, who approved of moderating the passions (*qui approbant mediocritatem passionum*), was wrong to say, “Every evil, even a moderate one (*mediocre*), should be avoided; for just as in the case of the body, one is not healthy even if he is only moderately sick, so too this sort of moderation in the sicknesses or passions of the soul is not healthy.” For the passions are not called ‘sicknesses’ or ‘disturbances’ except when they lack reason’s moderating influence (*nisi cum carent moderatione rationis*).

Reply to objection 1: The reply to the first objection is clear from what has been said.

Reply to objection 2: In every passion of the soul something is either added to or subtracted from the heart’s natural movement in the sense that the heart is moved either more intensely or less intensely by contraction and dilation (*intensius vel remissius movetur secundum systolen aut diastolen*); and accordingly the movement has the character of a passion. However, a passion need not always depart

from the order of natural reason.

Reply to objection 3: Insofar as the passions of the soul lie outside the order of reason, they incline one toward sin; however, they pertain to virtue insofar as they are ordered by reason.

Article 3

Does a passion always diminish a moral act's goodness?

It seems that a passion always diminishes a moral act's goodness:

Objection 1: Everything that impedes reason's judgment, which the moral act's goodness depends on, thereby diminishes the moral act's goodness. But every passion impedes reason's judgment; for in *Bellum Catilinarium* Sallust says, "All men who take counsel about doubtful matters should be free of hatred, anger, friendship, and pity (*ab odio, ira, amicitia atque misericordia vacuos esse decet*)."

Therefore, every passion diminishes a moral act's goodness.

Objection 2: A man's act is better to the extent that it is more similar to God; hence, in Ephesians 5:1 the Apostle says, "Be imitators of God, as most dear children." But God and the holy angels "punish without anger and give help without compassionate sadness," as Augustine puts it in *De Civitate Dei* 9. Therefore, it is better to do good works of this sort in the absence of a passion of the soul than in the presence of a passion.

Objection 3: Just as moral badness involves a relation to reason, so too does moral goodness. But moral badness is diminished by passion, since one who sins out of passion (*ex passione*) sins to a lesser degree than one who sins purposefully (*ex industria*). Therefore, one who does something good in the absence of a passion does a greater good than one who does it in the presence of a passion.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 9 Augustine says that the passion of pity (*miser cordia*) "is subject to reason when pity is shown in such a way that justice is preserved, as when help is given to someone who is poor, or when a penitent is forgiven." But nothing that is subject to reason diminishes moral goodness. Therefore, a passion of the soul does not diminish the goodness of a moral act (*non diminuit bonum moris*).

I respond: Just as the Stoics claimed that every passion of the soul is bad, so too they claimed as a result that every passion of the soul diminishes an act's goodness, since every good is either totally destroyed or made less good by being mixed with evil.

To be sure, this is true if by 'passions of the soul' we mean only disordered movements of the sentient appetite that are disturbances or sicknesses (*aegritudines*). However, if by 'passions' we simply mean all the movements of the sentient appetite, then it is part of the perfection of the human good that these passions should themselves be moderated by reason. For since a man's good lies in reason as its root, this sort of good will be more perfect to the extent that it is able to flow into more of the things that belong to a man. Hence, no one doubts that it is part of the perfection of the moral good that the acts of the exterior members should be directed by the rule of reason. Hence, since, as was explained above (q. 17, a. 7), the sentient appetite is able to obey reason, it is part of the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions of the soul should likewise be regulated by reason.

Therefore, just as it is better that a man should both will the good and do it by an exterior act, so too it is part of the perfection of the moral good that a man should be moved not only by his will but also by his sentient appetite—this according to Psalm 85:3 ("My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God"), where by 'heart' we understand the intellective appetite and by 'flesh' we understand the sentient appetite.

Reply to objection 1: There are two possible ways for the passions of the soul to be related to the judgment of reason.

One way is *antecedently*. In this way, since they cloud reason's judgment, which the moral act's goodness depends on, they diminish the act's goodness. For instance, it is more praiseworthy for someone do an act of charity because of reason's judgment than to do it solely out of the passion of pity (*misericordia*).

The second way is *consequently*. And this happens in two ways:

(a) *by way of redundancy*—specifically, because when the higher part of the soul is intensely moved toward something, the lower part likewise conforms to its movement. And in such a case the passion that consequently exists in the sentient appetite is a *sign* of the intensity of the will's act.

(b) *by way of choice*—specifically, when a man chooses by reason's judgment to be affected by some passion, in order that he might act more promptly because of the sentient appetite's cooperation. And in this way a passion of the soul *adds to* the action's goodness.

Reply to objection 2: There is no sentient appetite in God or the angels; neither do they have corporeal members. And so in them goodness does not involve the ordering of the passions or of corporeal acts, as it does in our case.

Reply to objection 3: A passion that tends toward evil and is antecedent to reason's judgment diminishes the sin, but a passion that is consequent in one of the ways explained above either *adds to* the sin or is a *sign* of the sin's being added to (*auget peccatum vel significat augmentum eius*).

Article 4

Is any passion of the soul morally good or bad by its species?

It seems that no passion of the soul is morally good or bad by its species:

Objection 1: Moral goodness and badness involve reason. But the passions exist in the sentient appetite, and so whatever has to do with reason is accidental to them. Therefore, since nothing that is *per accidens* is relevant to a thing's species, it seems that no passion is good or bad by its species.

Objection 2: Acts and passions have their species from their object. Therefore, if some passion were good or bad by its species, it would have to be the case that passions whose object is the good—e.g., love, desire, and joy—are good by their species, and passions whose object is the bad—e.g., hatred, fear, and sadness—are bad by their species. But this is clearly false. Therefore, it is not the case that any passion is good or bad by its species.

Objection 3: There is no species of passion that is not found in other animals. But moral goodness is found only in man. Therefore, no passion of the soul is good or bad by its species.

But contrary to this: In *De Civitate Dei* 9 Augustine says, "Pity (*misericordia*) belongs to virtue." Again, in *Ethics* 2 the Philosopher says that shame (*verecundia*) is a praiseworthy passion. Therefore, some passions are good or bad by their species.

I respond: It seems that one should repeat in the case of the passions what has been explained for the case of acts (q. 18, aa. 5-6), viz., that the species of an act or a passion can be thought of in two ways:

(a) insofar as it belongs to a *natural* genus (*in genere naturae*), and in this sense moral goodness and badness are irrelevant to the species of an act or a passion; and

(b) insofar as it belongs to a *moral* genus (*ad genus moris*), given that it participates in the voluntary and in the judgment of reason. And in this sense moral goodness and badness can belong to a species of passion to the extent that it takes as its object something that is of itself consonant with reason or at variance with reason (*de se conveniens rationi vel dissonum a ratione*)—as is clear in the case of shame (*verecundia*), which is a fear of what is base (*timor turpis*), and in the case of envy (*invidia*), which is sadness at the good of another (*tristitia de bono alterius*). For it is in this way that they are

relevant to the species of the exterior act.

Reply to objection 1: This argument goes through for the case of the passions insofar as they belong to a natural species, viz., insofar as the sentient appetite is thought of in its own right. But insofar as the sentient appetite obeys reason, the goodness or badness of reason exists in the passions *per se* and not *per accidens*.

Reply to objection 2: The passions that tend toward a good are good if it is a genuine good, and so are the passions that withdraw from a genuine evil. Conversely, passions that withdraw from a good and approach an evil are bad.

Reply to objection 3: In brute animals the sentient appetite does not obey reason. And yet insofar as brute animals are led by a certain natural estimative power that is subject to a higher reason, viz., God's reason, there is in them a certain likeness of moral goodness with respect to the passions of the soul.